

## **GENESIS: A STUDY**

The word, Genesis is Greek. It means the beginning. The Hebrew text has no titles or names. The first word is *bereshit*.

History and Literature: what is the purpose of Sacred Scripture? Revelation=the unveiling of God the divine message in human words through human writers. The Bible is grounded in history, actual people, places and events. Bible is “incarnated” through the language and thought processes of the people who “produce” the final written text, but “inspired” by the Holy Spirit which is God’s own life breath. The entire (very complicated) process has the hand of the creator-savior upon it; including actual events, observation and experience, oral transmission, writing, editing, final composition and the actual compilation of books into the two testaments (Jewish Bible and Christian Bible). As in all things, there is a core which is firm and foundational, and as one moves from the center one reaches those fringes where there is less certitude. Order to chaos, orthodox to heterodox to heretical. Some books are canonical for some churches and not others. Some writings are not canonical but have vitally important historical and theological material. (e.g. Maccabees or Didache). The texts are often in dialogue with the ideas, beliefs and writings of pagan neighbors. Sometimes, possibly, Israel might have reworked preexisting material and reshaped it into their YHWH perspective. At other times, stories are shaped integrating elements of the pagan stories so as to ‘correct’ or reject their teaching.

Of particular value is an awareness of the Enuma Elish, considered the most ancient creation text (18C BC). It is about 1,000 verses on seven clay tablets. 7<sup>th</sup> C BC copy was found in the ruins of Nineveh in 1875. There are similarities to Genesis, but the differences are far more apparent. The waters of precreation and the themes of chaos/order and dark/light are noteworthy. The Enuma Elish is an *apologia* of the rise of Babylon to replace the more ancient Sumerian culture. The replacement of goddesses by gods may be reflective of cultural elements. Creation by killing gods is turned on its head in Genesis where God speaks creation. The creation of the world and of humans (to be servants of the gods) from the blood and dead bodies of the gods is radically different from the sharply de-mythologized version of Genesis. So modern concerns like the age of the earth, evolution, the expanding universe are not addressed by the Bible. Mattheu Pageau's "The Language of Creation: Cosmic Symbolism in Genesis" puts it succinctly in chapter 1. The Spiritual Perspective asks "What does it mean? What truth does it embody?" while the Modern Materialist asks "How does it work? Of what material is it made?" Heaven and earth are general referents to the earth below and sky above, but they also symbolize the realm of the gods/spirit/eternal truth and the temporal stuff material (lower) creation. As such words and concepts would have had different meaning for an ancient Hebrew or Christian.

What we engage the text seeking will impact what we hear and how we understand. The questions we ask impact the answers we get, and more importantly, keep us from hearing what the text is saying. There can be no "all-

encompassing” reading, only different angles and perspectives. Maybe its best to read, look at connections and ponder.

### **Other Creation Accounts in Bible**

Psalm 74:13-17 provides a reminder, however, that the ancient Jews were cognizant of the mythic idea, incorporating its imagery into their sacred texts. The psalm begins with a heartfelt lament, bemoaning the feeling of abandonment, God’s flock turned over to those who destroyed the temple (like men with axes in the woods). The loss of the holy place is compounded by the absence of a prophet. As the psalmist ponders God ‘drawing back His hand and holding it to His bosom,’ He ponders:

(Alter, p. 259-260) *Yet God is my king of old, worker of rescues in the midst of the earth. You shattered (break, make ineffectual) the sea-god (yam-sea; Canaanite seven-headed dragon god was named \*Yam-nahur\*, associated with Leviathon). Refers to large bodies of water, rivers, or the east (toward Mediterranean) with your strength (oz, first appears in Exodus 15:2,13 celebrating Exodus), you smashed the monsters (tanniym=dragon, serpent, sea monster. Gen 1:21 in creation, Exodus 7 Moses’ staff, Is 27:1; Ez 29:3 God calls Pharaoh a monster in the river) heads on the waters (word used in Gen 1:2). You crushed (broke) the Leviathon’s (sea monster, dragon; symbol of Babylon; also Job 3, 41; Ps 104; Is 27) heads (both verses), you gave him as food to the desert-folk. [v16 yours is the day, yours also the night. It was you who founded the light and the sun. Genesis creation resonance)*

Psalm 89 (Alter) 89:8 God is held in awe in the council of the holy (the divine council of lesser gods)...Lord God of hosts (another)...You rule (*mashal*, same term in Gen 1:18 for 'heavenlies' which rule; 3:16 man rules woman; 4:7 God tells Cain he must rule sin/desire) over the tide of the sea (majesty, rising up, glory, pride, arrogance of the yam/Yamm), When its waves raise up (*Ps 42, 65, 89, 107; and prophetic references to judgement on nations Isaiah 51:15, Jeremiah 51:55, Zechariah 10:11 with prayer in Jonah 2:3*) it is you who subdue them. It is you who crushed Rahab (storm, fierceness, insolence, arrogance, mythical sea monster, Egypt) like a corpse. [see Isaiah 51:9 "Are you not the arm that cut Rahab apart and wounded the serpent?"]

## **Genesis 1**

WHEN GOD BEGAN TO CREATE THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH (Jewish Study Bible) When God began to create the heaven and earth (Alter)

IN THE BEGINNING WHEN GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH (NRSV) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (KJV, NET, RSV)

From the first line of the Bible we see that translation entails interpretation. In most cases, there is subtle impact, if any at all, but it provides us motivation to listen deeply and humbly.

Reading Jewish sources, the premier scholar, Rashi (b 1040 in France Commentaries on both the Masoretic text of the Jewish Bible and the Babylonian Talmud) employed

two approaches *pshat* (simple meaning) and *drash* (interpretative elaboration) Maimonides (Spain 1138) was more philosophically inclined, living under Islam his entire life. Philo of Alexandria (15BC—50AD) was a contemporary of Jesus. A noted philosopher, he saw a literal and metaphorical sense in the bible. He also read it allegorically (see Paul on Abraham's sons in Romans!) While taking the SS seriously, and often literally, he believed that the creation of Eve from Adam was meant metaphorically. The philosophical approaches, and the more exegetical (targums and rabbinic commentary) were complemented by the mystical-apocalyptic (pseudopigrapha, Jubilees, Qumran) which elaborated teaching based on figures from Genesis. Christian exegesis had similar approaches (literal/historical, spiritual: allegorical/metaphorical, moral, anagogical future).

The first word of Genesis *bereshit*. The first letter, *beth*, is closed on the top, right and bottom. The commentator says that the letter itself is the interpretive key, cutting off all that precedes, one can only go forward (Hebrew reads right to left). So modern western approaches are already lacking because we fail to see the shape (or numerical value) of the letters as significant. Also of note, the Jews do not have names for the days of the week. So we begin with the vocabulary.

*Resit* (*first, beginning, best, chief*). Refers to beginning 18x Gen 1:1; 10:10, 49:3; Jeremiah 26:1, 27:1, 28:1 beginning reigns. Reuben, and others, it is first-born; starting with Ex 23:19 also frequently used of first fruits 11x)

*Elohim bara* Plural “Gods” (El is singular) with singular verb refers to YHWH (2346x). In other cases, it can be the other gods (244x), Twice used of goddesses [1 King 11:5, 33 Solomon goes after foreign goddesses]. Ps 8:5 “You have made (man) little lower than the *Elohim*.”

*Bara* to create, shape, form; also cut, cut down, fashion. The scholars are quick to point out that this word is only used of God (and God alone) as the subject of creation. Used three times in chapter 1 (verse 1, 21, 27) the next two are creation of sea monsters and fish, then creation of humans). In 2:3 He rests from creation. 2:4 introduces a parallel account of creation, starting with the ‘*adam*. There are numerous references to both the totality of creation, God as the one who originally created (eg, the mountains), as well as the on-going creation of humanity in each generation. This language is similar to our own usage and does not strictly differentiate creation from the natural order (like giving birth, creating a nation). Isaiah 45:7 emphasizes the totality of creation (I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe, I am the Lord who do all these things. 45:12 I made the earth and created man upon it, it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host.” Is 65:17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth” (even salvation is envisioned as creation). These and other referents to God creating must be understood as a declaration of His Lordship and dominion over all. It is a rejection of the competing creation stories and foreign gods.

**[pondering]** Is creation a one and done or an ongoing process? Much of the salvation language of the Bible echoes creation language, raising the question is “salvation

a new creation” (which is an obvious theme). Does creation include keeping things going, or are ‘things’ provided with an independent existence? Does God intervene from outside or is He always at work with in the process? Is the Christian understanding of the word ‘creation’ clearly and narrowly defined or is there room for different models for understanding the how?]

**Theological Point** A key point, for me, is “God created.” This is a beginning point and personally the definitive point. Any discussion which denies “creation” means we have different starting places. It affects how we look at the world/cosmos. It also raises questions about His motivation and purpose—because Genesis doesn’t seem to answer those.

Before we go further, we will run through some other canonical and deuterocanonical writings which look at creation!

### **Creation in Wisdom and New Testament**

1. The Apostles Creed begins: “I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.” The Nicene Creed introduces elements from the NT portrayal of God the pre-existent Son. Scientific explanations of reality do not compete with the declaration of faith and should not be the basis for denying the revelation that God is creator. Creation is a non-negotiable declaration; however, how we understand the process is certainly debatable and is debated. For example, God creates each of us, but human sexual procreation is part of the process. God created Jerusalem, but

there were observable social and political events that were part of the creation.

2. PROVERBS Prov 3:19-20 “The Lord founded (*yacad—found, fix, establish, lay foundation, literally “to set”*) the earth (*eretz* is in Gen 1:1) by wisdom (*tabuwn-knowledge, understanding, intelligence. \*see Jeremiah 10:12 (He has made the earth by His power. He has established the world by His wisdom, and stretched out the heavens at His discretion) and Jeremiah 51:15 (He has made the earth by His power; He has established the world by His wisdom, and stretched out the heaven by His understanding). By His knowledge the depths burst apart, and the skies distilled dew.*

3. Prov 8:22 “The Lord created [*qana- Jewish-Christian controversy, was wisdom created or pre-existent—Jesus incarnation? Get, acquire, create, possess; “of God originating, creating, redeeming His people, to erect. 84x in 76v]* me (wisdom). In the distant past I was fashioned [*nasaq to pour out, fashion, anoint (like a king). At the beginning (roshe literally head, top, summit, so beginning) [qedem—east 50x, but also ancient time 20x]* There was still no deep, at the origin of the earth. There was still no deep when I was brought forth, no springs rich in water; before the mountains were sunk, Before the hills I was born [*khool-many meanings, to dance, twist, travail, to wait, to suffer, to be brought forth (like having a baby)...* 8:27 I was there when He set the heavens into place...when He made the heavens above firm and the fountains of the deep gushed forth...When He fixed

the foundations of the earth... rejoicing before Him at all times.”

4. WISDOM of SOLOMON Wis 9:9 With you is wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world; she understands what is please in your sight... 10:1-4 Wisdom protected the first-formed father of the world, when he alone had been created; she delivered him from his transgression, and gave him strength to rule all things. But when an unrighteous man departed from her in his anger, he perished because in rage he killed his brother. When the earth was flooded because of him, wisdom again saved it, steering the righteous man by a paltry piece of wood (continues to insert wisdom in other biblical stories for two chapters). WISDOM OF JESUS BEN SIRACH Ecclesiasticus 1:4 Wisdom was created before all other things and prudent understanding from eternity.
5. John 1 “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in Him was life and the light was the life of people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not apprehend (understand or overcome)it.
6. Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things and in him all

things hold together. [God resides in Him and reconciles all through Him]

7. 1 Corinthians 8:6 [reacting to idols and pagan gods]  
“as in fact there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom we exist.”
8. Hebrews 1 “God...has spoken to us by a Son, whom He appointed heir to all things, through whom He also created the world. He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and He sustains (bears along) all things by His powerful word.”

**Genesis 1:1 When God created the heavens and earth—the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.**

Listen to the words carefully, there is no mention of the cosmos or universe. The focus is much smaller. The Greek usage *Cosmos* implies order and meaning. [The Greek word *cosmos* (translated as world—meaning all creation, the earth, the people of the earth, +the fallen, ungodly, rebellious, sin, +worldly affairs/things especially the fleeting distractions.)]

## WORDS

Heavens *shawmayim* (*heaven, heavens, sky; also the abode of God. From unused root lofty*) 418x in 392v Ten times in Genesis 1; the order is reversed in Gen 2: in the parallel creation account, which has a more “grounded” perspective! The twin meanings of heaven will continue

throughout the Bible (eventually becoming a circumlocution for God—"Kingdom of Heaven")

Earth *eretz* (2,499x) same as English, it can refer to ground/earth, land, fields, earth/planet. The earth is *tohu* and *bohu*.

**Tohu** (25x 19v) from the root for a waste, a desert. *Empty, unreality, chaos, wilderness, confusion*. Isaiah has half the uses. Isaiah 40 the nations and their princes are *tohu* (*nothing*), the idols and those who make them are *tohu*. Is 45 The Lord says He did not make creation to be *tohu/chaos* but to be lived in. It isn't *tohu*, because He is God alone. The spirituality of creation is present here in the prophet's words and we must be formed by the revelation. Perhaps more striking is the final appearance of the word in Jeremiah 4:23. In Jeremiah 4 he is beside himself in anguish at the pending horror and doom. Employing Wisdom language/argumentation he accuses the peoples of being foolish, stupid and "skilled" (a wisdom term) at evil. "*I looked on the earth and it was "waste and void" and to the heavens and they had no "light"* There is also negation of the 'adam, birds, fruitful land—judgement as anti-creation (cf Noah ark). Ponder the meaning of human sin and violence and God's "will/control"

**Bohu** (3x 3v) from a root meaning void or empty, hence, empty, void, waste. Obviously, it occurs here and in Jeremiah, as we just saw. The third occurrence is in Isaiah 34 in a judgement oracle against the nations. It extends to the heavenly realm (34:4 *all the host of heaven shall rot away and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall wither like a leaf on a vine or fruit withering on a fig tree.*

Turning his attention to Edom (v6) with threats of the sword, slaughter and a “day of vengeance”, Isaiah uses language from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorah. 34:11 “*He shall stretch the line of confusion (tohu) over it, and the plummet of chaos (bohu) over its nobles.* The Jewish Study Bible (p13) comments that Moderns consider ‘nothing’ to be the opposite of created order, whereas Ancients viewed it as ‘chaos’ (understood as a malevolent force)

**Hoshhek** (80x) *darkness or dark (77), obscurity (2x)*. [there are four other words from this root connected with darkness and mysterious impenetrability] related no Four times in Genesis 1 verses 2, 4, 5, 18. Next in Exodus 10 (darkness over the land of Egypt but Hebrews had light and Exodus 14 ‘cloud and darkness’ separate Egyptian pursuers from Hebrew slaves. Occurs in Job 23x Psalms 11x. Isaiah warns that evil call “darkness light” and “light darkness,” a reminder that what God has divided must remain divided (and spiritual depth of the words resonates). Isaiah 8, a judgement on Israel, who consult with the spirits of the dead (no life!) Isaiah says that they will have “no dawn” (*shakar*) 8:28 “they will turn their faces upward, or they will look to the earth , but will see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness.” 9:1 “But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish” Isaiah 9:2 “the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined”...because a new prince is born [applied to Jesus in Christmas readings]

+rabbi on youtube asked: how do we picture creation of light? Was it vast and expansive? Or a small spark which grew and grew?

These other readings demonstrate the deeper, metaphorical meaning of darkness. Perhaps the main point of Genesis 1 is to shed light on the mysterious world we live in and offer a tiny glimpse into God's perspective. We have already seen that there are details (the role of wisdom and the Word as God the Son) in other biblical accounts which broaden and deepen (and fill us!!!) our insights into the creation. Since the Modern Age, Christians have been defensive with "the world" and sometimes adopted the materialist assumptions of the culture. Christians want to make the bible answer the wrong questions. Rather than see this in terms of the Big Bang Theory, shouldn't we rather ask, "What is God saying here?"

Running a word search on darkness reveals 171x in 151 verses. Many are references to physical darkness, but regularly it refers to something more spiritual. Proverbs 4:19 "the way of the wicked is like deep darkness." The metaphor for folly as darkness is a reminder that we commonly use the word 'dark' in a negative way to describe human activities. Is 45:7 God declares "I form light and create darkness; I make weal and create woe...I am God." Isaiah emphasizes the uniqueness of YHWH and that all things depend on Him for existence, although Genesis 1 makes no mention of God creating the dark.

The prophets turn the Jewish hope in the 'Day of the Lord' upside down. Amos 5:18, 20 "Day of the Lord is darkness", Joel 2:2 "a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and

thick darkness; 2:31 the sun shall be turned to darkness  
 Zephaniah 1:15 a day of wrath, a day of darkness and  
 gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness. This darkness  
 is not primarily about the level of light, is it? Ezekiel 32:8 is  
 part of a scathing judgement full of threats against  
 Pharaoh, including “I will darken the stars above you and  
 put darkness on your land.” Revelation 16:10 includes the  
 fifth angel who pours out a bowl of darkness on the earth.

The New Testament employs light and darkness imagery.  
 When Jesus is arrested (Luke 22:53) He upbraids them for  
 bringing weapons, as if He were a bandit. He says, “*But this  
 is your hour, and the power of darkness.*” The power of  
 darkness is a theologically loaded expression and it shows  
 in the narratives as well. The crucifixion (Mk 15:33) “at the  
 sixth hour darkness covered the land.” The earliest NT  
 writing, 1 Thessalonians 5:5 “you are all sons of light and  
 sons of the day, we are not the night or of darkness.”  
 Ephesians 3:8 describes the Gentile convert “once you were  
darkness but now you are light in the Lord.” The Gospel of  
 John says that people prefer darkness (and reject Jesus—  
 who is the true light come into the world).

**Panim** 1952x in 1746v, over half meaning “before”;  
 frequently face or surface(as here)

**Tehome** from a root word which means, among other  
 things, make loud noise or commotion, *tehome* is verbally  
 connected to the crashing waves, and by extension the  
 great deep beneath the earth, but also the large bodies of  
 waters like the sea. Scholars debate whether the Hebrew  
 word is related to the word Tiamat which was the water  
 goddess in pagan creation accounts.

## ***Ruah Elohim rahap***

*Ruah*—from root to breathe, to blow, to smell. Most frequently *spirit, also breath, or wind; also mind, vain thing; energy, anger, courage*. Various other translations. No one knows exactly what the verse is saying, and perhaps that is the point. Is it a great stormy wind (think of the connection to Jonah, Jesus in the boat during storm stories)? Is it God breathing on creation? Is it the creative Spirit of God hovering over the waters? Are the waters pre-existing chaos? Or the raw material of creation? More and more I am coming to understand that the people of Israel were very familiar with the religious practice and mythic explanations of reality, Abraham and his family before him were part of that culture. The stories predate Israel by centuries. Many assumptions about what the hearer/reader of Israel's Scriptures knew and understood and believed shape the text. We have to dig to find references which the Ancient Hebrew would have understood instantly. So obviously it is a reflection of the Egyptian and Babylonian stories which the Jewish writers are "correcting"!

*Rahap* "moving" two other uses. Dtn 32:11 reference to a mother Eagle hovering over its nest and Jeremiah 23:9 the impact of the word of God on the prophets shaking bones (literally soften, or 'moved')

***Panim mayim*** face/surface of water

*Mayim* 575x (another plural noun like heavens, *water*) figures heavily here 11x and next in Noah story 18x. After that it makes a significant appearance in several narratives at wells or springs. Here we must understand, water

surrounds the entirety of the “skies&earth” so that water from the deep abyss below the world and water which falls from above (Gen 7:11 indicates in the sky there are flood gates, literally “lattice windows,” or chimney or sluice). Our understanding of underground water and precipitation is not part of their world view. Water will always be ambivalent—needed for life, for crops, yet also dangerous in storms, and a metaphor for chaos. Remember, the chaos is not a metaphor to them, but a deeper spiritual meaning of the word. Chaos and destruction are very real. In other texts attacking armies or personal problems are called overwhelmed by the waves or the waters rising up to one’s neck. And do not forget the Exodus connection!

**And God said, “Let there be light.”**

Obviously, the direct creation by fiat sets the Hebrew Scriptures apart from anything else in ancient texts. We have seen how John 1 makes the verb “said” into a noun, “the Word,” and also how he combines light and life. John makes clear that Jesus is the light coming into the world. Does this mean that God is creating the Son? Is this a begetting? Is this light coming forth from God created or uncreated? It is not clear because there is no light source mentioned. Ancient understanding of light matters as well.

We know Jesus says, “I am the light of the world,” and, “as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” (Jn 8:12; 9:5) “God is light, in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 Jn 1:5) The last book of the bible concludes with the City of God, which needs no sun, nor lamp because God will be its light (Rev 21:3; 22:5). Such an understanding is thoroughly biblical. Psalm 27:1 (The Lord is my light and

my salvation); 36:9 (In Your light we see light); 43:3 (send out your light and your truth); 119:105 (Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path). The reality of light in Genesis 1 is a mystery. What we know is God said, let it be, and it was.

**1:4 And God saw the light, that it was good, and God separated the light and the darkness.**

*Ra'a* (1313X to see 879x, look 83x, behold 68x) Obviously this is anthropomorphic language. God made light, He *saw* it was good. Seeing is linked to many incidents of salvation, something I preached in Lent. God can act in space and time because He has entered a realm of measurable reality. He does so at a cost, perhaps this is why the “Word” is said to be the “through which” He creates. The judgment that light is good is vitally important, because it is an assessment which will recur. Over and over again, God will see “it is good” which stands in stark contrast to philosophies/religions which see created reality as the work of lesser gods and inherently flawed. Spirituality which seeks to escape the earth (echoes to be found in the Christian focus on going to heaven) are part and parcel of “dualist” religions, especially notable is Gnosticism.

***Badal*** (divide, separate, differentiate, sever)

Five times. Where God separates 6 light/dark; 7 water/water; 14 day/night; 18 night darkness. The next time (Ex 26:33) a veil separates the holy place from the most holy place. In Leviticus, God separates clean/unclean and separates His people from other people. Separating is a priestly function, and priests order by separating because they are God’s representatives. In the ancient world, the

priest (like kings) inhabited both worlds, hence the ritual garments (of extravagant metals and jewelry. We cannot let modern/Christian concepts muddy the waters. Keeping things separate is a primary function of society because it is part of ordering chaos. Cutting off and casting out are important, recurring themes in both the Jewish Bible and the Christian Scriptures. Jesus talks of judgement and argues about the criteria for separation (sheep and goats, some will be surprised) Boundaries are inherently divine in origin. Blurring the boundaries is, in this view, an act of deceit against God.

**And God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.” And there was evening and there was morning, first day.**

I remember the first time I attended a bible study by a real teacher. He startled me when he pointed out, there is no source for the light. He then followed up with the question, “How can there be evening and morning without the sun?”

**Ore** (light; translated as light 114x, day 2x, bright, clear, flood, herbs, lightening, morning, sun). The third appearance, it is used again in Gen 1:18 in the parallel creation of sun and moon; then again in Exodus 10:23 where God gives light to Israel and curses Egypt in dark. 32x in Job!

**Yom** day (day 2008x, time 64x, chronicles 37x, daily 44x, ever 18x. [8-10x each: continually, when, as, while, full, whole, 44x misc) **layil** night 233x **erev** (137x evening, night, sunset) //Exodus 29:37-40 Seven days of atonement to make the altar holy, and all who touch it holy (one lamb is sacrificed at morning, the other lamb at evening).

Creation pattern seen at the core of ritual sacrifice and worship, making people holy. The words evening and **Boqer** (morning) raises the question: HOW? There is no sun or earth to produce this phenomenon. Physically I makes little sense but theologically it functions as an illustration of the importance of order in time as well as space. Once again, Genesis is a divine explanation, but in the form and language of Semitic people a thousand years before Christ.

\*\*\*\*\*Does the earth sit on pillars/columns? While not mentioned in the Genesis account, they appear elsewhere. Psalm 75:3 (*When the earth totters, with all its inhabitants, it is I who keep its pillars steady*) *ammud* most frequently seen in the pillar of cloud or the pillars of the sacred place. It occurs also in Job 9:3 (*who shakes the earth out of its place and its pillars tremble*) and 26:11 with a twist (*the pillars of heaven tremble, and are astounded at its rebuke*). Another word, *mosada*, occurs ten times. Several reference the foundations of the earth: Psalm 18:7, 15 (*then he channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare*); Micah 6:2 (*Hear you mountain, the controversy of the Lord, and you enduring foundation of the earth, the Lord has a controversy with His people...*) ; Isaiah 24:18 (*...For the windows of heaven are opened, and he foundations of the earth tremble. The earth will be broken, torn, shaken, stagger, sway=judgment on "the host of heaven in heaven and on earth the kings of the earth"*). Hosts of heaven is related to the divine council, of the "Let us make" verse later. Jeremiah 31:37 (*the foundations of the earth down below can be explored*) \*\*\*\*\*

## 1:6-8 Second Day

These verses are counter-intuitive for modern Christians (i.e., those who believe that NASA is real). The concept of an expanding universe which is 93 billion years old. What does it mean that they think the universe is flat?

Expanding? Expanding into what? The bible provides no explanation beyond there is water everywhere. The ancients could not imagine a three-day trip to the moon, or lander on Mars. A word like “light years” is meaningless. There are no answers (just sentences that sound like answers which are just a twist on mystery). Where did it come from and where is it going? That is the Bible answer [YHWH] and that is the question which is most important.

In the Ancient Near East most cosmologies were based on waters above and below the earth. Egypt had the god Nut holding up the sky. The blue sky has the appearance of water, so it makes sense that the ancient people assumed it was (rain falls down, water gurgles up from the earth). They knew you could dig holes (even deep holes) so they understood the earth was not a thin layer (relatively speaking). Our concept of a multi-layered atmosphere of gases which thin out into the vacuum of space is not what they envisioned.

**Raqia** (from the root **raqa**: “beat, stamp, stretch, spread” Ps 136:6 “the one who spread out the earth over the water,” Isaiah 44:24 “I the Lord made everything, who alone stretched out the sky, who fashioned the earth by myself.”) 18x Seven in Genesis referring to the sky/firmament. Which was thought to be a solid holding back the waters. Ps 19:1 “*The heavens declare the glory of the Lord; the*

*firmament proclaims His handiwork”* (Psalm 150:1, too) In Ezekiel’s vision of the heavenly throne room the four references are translated as platforms (which look like ice, or sapphires). Lastly Daniel says the wise will shine like the stars in the heavenly expanse.

**Tavak** middle, through, between. The root means sever. The firmament is in the middle/between the waters. It **badal** separates/divides them.

But in verse 7, God makes the space (it is not simply spoken into being like the light)

**‘asah** (*to do or make* literally over fifty different meanings including labour, bring forth, maintain, take, trim, vex). The first appearance of this word, God will also make the two lights, animals and humans. The earth will make vegetation (usually translated as bring forth or produce)

God named it sky **shamayim** (*root word=lofty*) It recurs in twelve verses in Genesis 1. The word also means heaven(s) and can refer to the abode of the celestial as well as God. Sometimes God is said to be in the heavens of the heavens. Our modern division is clear (physical sky and spiritual heaven) but in the thinking of the ancients this was not the case. Hence, God will have to “come down” to see what humans are doing. This is also why mountains are sacred places of encounter, for ancients said that the gods lived in the heights. Hence, Moses encounters God on Mount Horeb/Sinai (as did Elijah). Be aware of the terminology as a repeated pattern connected to encountering God and sacred space.

Evening and Morning: the second day...

### **Day 3 Land and Vegetation** Genesis 1:9-13

Apparently in the LXX, God sees that it is good, which raises the question is there a scribal error in the Massoretic text (which is less ancient than the LXX, even if it is in the original Hebrew). At any rate, there are two goods on this day.

Separate dry land

Let there be. The Hebrew *hayah* (*to be, become, come to pass, exist, happen, fall out*) is a root for the name Yahweh (I am who am, I will be who I will be, I am who I will be)

*Qava* (*strong, twisted or tied, gather 1x ; by extension to wait for 29x, look 13x, hope, expect*) 2x Genesis, other 47x in Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah.

*Yabash* dry land. Twice here. Next Exodus 4:9 (pour water on dry land and it turns to blood), Exodus 14-15 (four times, the Israelites pass through the waters on dry land), next Joshua 4:22 (they pass through the Jordan River on dry land), next Nehemiah 9:11 and Psalm 66:6 recount the story,

+++ (Exodus 14. The repetitive patterns throughout the Jewish Bible include both story types and words. There are all manner of twists and turns in this repetition, it is not sterile, but certainly we are invited to see the connections and ponder the accounts together! As we see there are two stories about miraculously passing through waters—Elijah and Elisha will provide two others—although elements and vocabulary may differ. Of special interest is the verbal connections between creation and the great salvation event of the Jewish Bible. Briefly some of the connections:

Darkness covers the Egyptians while light is upon Israel, as cloud and fire leads them. The Sea is *yam* in both cases. There is the word *paniyim/face* on the face of the earth, face of the deep. A strong wind *ruah* will separate the waters (*mayim* also Genesis 1), the water is separated from the dry land. The people will walk through *tavek (the midst)* of the water—same word used of the firmament which divides water and water. The story of salvation echoes creation (hence the idea that salvation is a “New” Adam, Jerusalem, Israel, heaven and earth) chaos waters will consume Egypt—death—while making life possible for God’s people.

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Dry land is *eretz (earth, ground, land; ‘whole’ earth)* 2000+ its constantly recurring so hard to find special significance. But the role of the land, the land promised to Abraham and the patriarchs, the land of Israel, and the term “people of the land” is a disparaging term, referring either to those who are rebellious or unfaithful to Torah and people of low social function.

Earth and sea: God sees they are good

God continues “Let the earth *dasha (sprout, green)*... And the earth *yatsa (1,000x)* “go forth.” *Dasha* only occurs one other time in Joel 2:22 (and Genesis 1:11) “do not be afraid...for the pastures are springing up and the tree bears its fruit” (tree and fruit are also in this passage).

The third is *asa* as the trees make fruit (all the other uses refer to God’s direct activity of making, as mentioned before)

The first plant life *esev* (*grass, herbs*) occurs in three accounts in Torah. Here, in the creation account of Adam and Eve, and in the Exodus account of the plague of hail.

The Hebrew has a verb noun combination *zara zera*

*Zara* (*v*) *seeding, to sow or scatter seeds* 56x (Lev 12:22 applied to pregnancy)

*Zera* (*n*) 229x seeds of plant, semen, human offspring.

*Peiy* (*fruit*) 119x (for times children, once in Genesis 30) The importance of fecundity and reproduction in the Torah emphasizes that God is the God of LIFE!

*Min* (*kind, species, root is "portion"*) Factors in here and with animals. Then repeatedly in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 in section on clean and unclean foods.

End of third day

#### **Day 4 "Lights"**

The beginning of our second set of three **refocuses** on light. Clearly, the sun is not seen as the source of life-giving photosynthesis, because plants and vegetation already exist prior to sun (moon & stars). The Bible does not answer our modern questions (like how); rather it challenges us to hear, ponder and submit to what it does reveal. We live in a "materialist" world with materialistic assumptions. We assume our facts and world view! We look at the sky and see an endless expanse of empty space with burning stars and planets (solid and gaseous) in orbit around them—and declare that the (silly) ancients, mistakenly, saw these things and thought that they were gods. We declare that there are no such things, and expect,

therefore, that our Bible agrees with us. And even when it doesn't, we miss it or dismiss it. Our frame of reference is what we think is true, which we then project onto the Biblical text (because it is "true," as we defined it). This materialism is behind the confusion about divine and human causality. Divine activity is neither sufficient (God acts alone and we are passive recipients of "grace") nor supplemental (God helping us as a companion), although our limited language frequently makes it sound that way. God is not like a friend who comes alongside us, but our words are too small to capture the truth and our minds are too limited to grasp it, even if they could. The spiritual realm interpenetrates the material, but they operate in a different dimension of reality. Our mind and brain are simply not the same thing. Angels and humans are from different "worlds". When the Bible refers to the rulers of the world it can mean either human and 'divine' (whether rebels or obedient) and often both.

The ancient view looks at the sky and sees the movement and relationship of those twinkling lights as a manifestation of the invisible spiritual forces at work in the world. Worship of astral deities is found in countless pagan religions. It makes no sense to us, but perhaps there is something going on there? The Ugaritic myths, for example, which pre-date the Bible include a heavenly host which are the divine council of the chief god, El. Hebrew parallels sometimes call them the holy ones. In both Ugaritic and in the Bible they are called 'elohim' or 'sons of the Elohim,' and frequently messengers/angels.

The ancient understanding of the celestial lights, which in all cultures were connected to various gods, is the setting.

That is the world our Hebrew ancestors inhabited two to three thousand years ago. That is an important context of meaning for everything they wrote. Modern horoscopes, are a cartoonish variation of the ancient belief that in the heavenly realm, the luminaries were signs of the spiritual forces at work controlling human/earthly existence. The Hebrew SS rework this emphasizing the dominion of YHWH. The stars and moon will serve as signs for the feast days and worship cycle of Israel, but in both Testaments, Jews and Christians meant much more by the word sun, moon, stars and gods than we are accustomed to realize.

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[ (cf Job 1:6ff *one day the sons of god came to present themselves before the Lord, and the adversary/accuser also came among them.*) Daniel 8:10 *It (the horn) grew until it reached the host of heavens, and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground and trampled them. 11 He even exalted as high as the Prince of the host...13 then I heard a holy one speaking and another holy one said...25 He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human means.* Daniel 10 Daniel prayed and fasted for three weeks, when he saw a ‘man’ dazzling bright. In the vision he hears the man say, 10:12 *“your prayer was heard, and I have come because of your prayer. However, the Prince of the Persian Kingdom opposed me for twenty-one days; now Michael, a prince of the first rank, has come to my aid, after I was detained there with the kings of Persia...20-21 Now I must go back to fight the Prince of Persia. When I go off, the Prince of Greece will come*

*in. No one is helping me against them accept your prince, Michael.” Daniel Smith-Christopher (TNIB) Volume VII, p113, comment: (Here is an interesting association of the host/armies of heaven and stars...The belief that stars were actual beings is suggested in a variety of places in the Bible, usually associated with Caananite/pagan belief.*

Some examples:

[2 Kings 23:5 (Josiah’s reform removed priests; *those who made offerings to Ba’al, to the sun and moon and constellations—al the host of heaven*), Jeremiah 19:13 (judgement of the “Lord of Hosts” against *all the houses on the roofs of which offerings were made to the whole host of heaven and libations to other gods*”), Isaiah 24:21-23 (*In that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven in heaven And the kings of the earth on the earth, they shall be gathered in a dungeon...and locked in a prison...And the moon shall be ashamed and the sun shall be abashed. For the Lord of Hosts shall reign before the Ancient Ones (elders) on Mount Zion gloriously (kabod).* 1 Kings 22:19 Micaiah the prophet reports (*I saw the Lord seated upon His throne, with all the host of heaven standing in attendance to the right and left*). Nehemiah 9:6 (*you alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, and all their host, the earth and everything upon it, the seas and everything in them. You keep them all alive, and the host of heaven prostrate themselves before you.*) Judges 5 Deborah and Barak sang of God coming to do battle against Israel’s enemies v20 *‘the stars fought from heaven.’* Isaiah 14:12ff (*How are you fallen from heaven, heylel [bright, shining—translated Lucifer] son of the dawn/morning [ben Sahar] ...for you said “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the*

*stars of God, I will sit on the Mount of the congregation...I will ascend the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High” Amos 5:26 (You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your images, which you made for yourselves)*

*Deuteronomy 32:8 (When the Host High gave nations their inheritance, at His dividing of the human race, He stationed boundaries for peoples by the numbers of the gods...(YHWH’s portion is Jacob)...12 (YHWH alone did lead them, not with Him any foreign/ strange god [el])*

#### [NEW TESTAMENT STARS

*Matthew 2 (“we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him”), Mark 13:25 (the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heaven will be shaken)/ / Mt 24:29 (immediately after the suffering of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken). Jude 1:13 (they are wild waves... wandering stars, for whom the deepest darkness has been reserved) 2 Peter 1:9 (until the [phosphoros] morning star rises in your hearts), Revelation 1:16 (the One among the lampstands...in his right hand he held seven stars... as for the mystery...20 the seven stars are the angels of the seven church and the seven lampstands are the seven churches). Revelation 2:28 to the ones that hold fast and conquer (I shall give him the morning star). Rev 6:13 (and the stars of the sky fell to the earthlike a fig tree dropping its unripe figs) Revelation 8:10-11 (the third angel blew his trumpet and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch...and its name was Wormwood). Rev 9:1 and the fifth angel blew his trumpet and I saw a star fall from heaven to the earth.] Reve*

22:16 (*Jesus said, "I am the root and descendent of David and the bright morning star"*)

Here we must ponder, how do we understand the workings of the Spirit of God? What does "causality" mean when applied to the angelic or demonic?

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Let there be *ma'or (n) light, luminary mostly refers to lamp (liturgical in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers)*. The symbolic role of the lights is present. The Jewish year is solar, but the lunar phases impact the months

A year in the Hebrew calendar can be 353, 354, 355, 383, 384, or 385 days long.

Regular common years have 12 months with a total of 354 days. [Leap years](#) have 13 months and are 384 days long. Months with uneven numbers usually have 30 days, while months with even numbers have 29 days.

In addition to these regular (*kesidrah*) year lengths, both common and leap years can be a day shorter (*cheserah* or deficient year with 353/383 days) or a day longer (*shlemah* or complete year with 355/385 days).

These alterations are designed to prevent [Rosh Hashana](#) and other holidays from falling on certain days of the week. In practice, a day is added to the 8th month (Marcheshvan) or subtracted from the 9th month (Kislev).

In civil contexts, a new year in the Jewish calendar begins on Rosh Hashana on Tishrei 1. However, for religious purposes, the year begins on Nisan 1.

*Owr (v) shining, lighting* (root for feminine noun *owr-* in Let there be light). The lights will give light Ezekiel 32:8 is a judgement which reverses creation "all the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, and bring darkness upon your land."

Signs *oth* (*feminine noun*) sign 40x token 14x ensign 2x miracle 2x. The symbolic world view is at home with signs—which are a mix of concrete matter and deeper meaning. The next appearances in Genesis in order are the mark & Cain, Noah & rainbow, Abraham & circumcision. Moses & return to Mount Sinai/Horeb. In Exodus repeatedly it refers to signs for Pharaoh to obey God, but keeping Sabbath is called a sign of the covenant.

Seasons also translated as congregation, refers to the appointed times (a particular chosen day, but usually days set apart for liturgical worship).

1:16-18

Two *gadol*=*great lights* (*maowr*) Sun and Moon *memshala* (fem N 15/14x) ruke, dominion, domain (used of human, celestial or God) [psalm 136:8-0 “*the sun to rule the day, for His mercy endures forever, and the moon and stars to rule the night, for His mercy endures forever*] root *mashal* (*verb* 1. *To make like, comparison* 2. *Rule* this is the Hebrew word which is called parable in Greek) occurs in 1:18; 3:16 man will rule the woman after the sin; 4:7 Cain is warned sin crouches at the door, it desires to rule him. It refers to the rule of oppressors, kings, slave owners, and sometimes God. Reference to the ruling function of the celestial lights. *Kowkab* (*star*) In Joseph’s dream (37:9) eleven stars bow to him In Genesis 26:4 Abraham is told that his seed will be like the stars (Gen 15:5; 22:17; 26:4), which I always thought meant number (like sand), but Sirach 44:21 (*Therefore the Lord assured him with an oath that the nations would be blessed through his offspring ; that He would make him as numerous as the dust of the earth, and*

*exalt his offspring like the stars, and given them an inheritance from sea to sea...)* Numbers 24:17 (*a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter rise out of Israel...*).

Deuteronomy 4:19 “*and take heed lest you lift your eyes to heaven and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage...*” Robert Alter (Torah, 900) This notion...is a curious one by the lights of later monotheism. To Israel the worship of the one overmastering, God was assigned, whereas other nations were entrusted to the supervision of lesser celestial beings, *beney elohim*, (“the sons of God”) and came to worship these intermediary beings as though they were autonomous deities. Polytheism, in this view, is a reflection of the fact that the sundry nations, unlike Israel, must have not been chosen by the one God to serve Him.

While the text is easily read as simply the lights in the sky, it should also be clear that the ancient assumptions about the ‘heavenlies’ are also in the background and must be considered when hearing these verses.

## **DAY 5 Genesis 1:20-23**

In the second parallel day, YHWH is filling “the waters (*mayim*)” and sky with living things. The Elohim says “Let there be...” The two Hebrew words are spelled the same, with different vowels (sh-r-tz). The first *sharatz* (Verb:to wiggle or creep; by extension to multiply) only occurs 14x (creep 6x, move 1x; bring forth abundantly 5x, breed 1x, increase 1x). It is part of the creation account, re-appears in

the Flood Story, Pharaoh uses it in Exodus concerning the Hebrew slaves in Egypt (double meaning? God fulfilling His promise to Abraham, but Pharaoh views them as multiplying creepers like reptiles). Then five times in Leviticus 11—purity laws on clean/unclean. Also Ps 105:30 (reference to frogs in Egypt) and lastly Ezekiel 47:9.

The second *sheretz* (Noun m: creeping things, here small aquatic animals, swarming group of small creatures). Here and Flood story, 11x in Leviticus—ten in chapter 11—with reference to insects, lizards, etc. as well.

Filled with *chay* (adjective and noun 500x—living, green vegetation, flowing waters, lively/active human, renewal at Springtime. Masculine Noun=life, sustenance. Feminine Noun= living thing, animal, appetite, renewal.) Most commonly translated live 197x, Life 144x, beast 76x.

Another set of repetitive words (*ofe* and *ufe*). Flying creatures (*ofe* Noun, refers to birds, bats, insects. Root ‘to cover’—like feathers or wings—and there is a similar concentration in creation accounts, Flood, and Leviticus 11 as well as Deuteronomy. Afterwards, references are to the threat that birds will feast on the flesh of the dead.

*Ufe* (v, root word 32/29v, to fly, also to cover—as with wings). Several times refers to angels flying.

God (*bara-created/made*. 1:1 in the beginning God created heaven and earth, 1:21, 1:27 the humans in the Divine image, ) the *gagol* (great)tannin (*dragon, serpent, sea monster, venomous snake, whale* Ps 44:19/Job 30:29, Is 13:22. Is 34:13, 35:7, 43:20, Jer 10:22, 49:33, 51:37, Mich 1:8= jackal) Ex 7 (rods became serpents in v 9, 10,12), Dtn 32:33 (compares the wine of unfaithful Israel to serpents

poison). Ez 29:3; 32:2 Pharaoh is called a river monster (also Leviathan Isaiah 27:1 **1** In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.) Isaiah 51:9 (Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces, that didst pierce the dragon?) Much like the greater and lesser light (sun/moon), this may be a reference to the pagan creation stories—and a clear delineation between YHWH and the created lower deities.

God *barak* (*blessed*) 330x. In creation the *He* will also bless the human (not animals) and the seventh day. Blessings will mark numerous narratives (Noah, Abraham, etc) and is a worthy word to pursue and study.

### **Day 6 Genesis 1:24—31**

“Let the earth bring forth living creatures” In 1:11 God says “let the land (*dasha*) sprout forth/green” [rare word only three times in Bible) and 1:12 “the earth *yasha*” [another root which is not rare! at 1,000+ 518x out, 410x forth, bring forth or proceed] The key point to ponder is that the earth (recall heaven and earth are the whole of creation) participates in the production of vegetative and animal life. What could this mean for us today?

living creatures *chay* (*living*) *nephesh* (f Noun from root verb *naphash* to take a breath, be refreshed, in the sense of “take a breather” Verb form occurs three times [Ex 23:12 command for work to cease and slave/free to take a rest; Ex 31:17 connected to day God ceased from His work,

rested, and was refreshed; 2Sam 6:14 David and his men take a rest after an exhausting journey). The noun is very prevalent 757/683, occurring the first two times in the previous verses on living creature in the seas, and here on the land. The word is loaded with meaning. Literally, a *breathing creature* [it is translated soul 475x, life 117x, person 29x, mind 15x, heart 15x, creature 9x, body 8x, himself 8x, yourself 6x, dead 5x] The concept includes both the mental and emotional, the passions, desires and appetites. I have heard two Jewish Bible scholars discuss the nephesh as “an open mouth/throat/neck,” StudyLight website says that in Hebrew thought the throat was the location of the nephesh Ps 69:12 the waters have risen up to my neck.] The LXX generally translated it as *psyche* (*soul*) although the Hebrew is much broader than a soul as popularly understood.

*Min* the creation of living creatures (land, sea, air) are all “after their kind” or “of their own kind.” Order is central to the Ancient concept of “creation,” it is not about making stuff, it is about keeping an order and making life possible (and subduing chaos, which dis-integrates creation and produces death).

Cattle (*behema* 189x fem Noun, probably related to a root word for mute, hence translated [dumb] beast (136x) or Cattle (53x); but can include other livestock; domesticated and even wild beasts—any nonhuman animal.

*Remes* (*creeping things; from root verb ramash in v 20-21*) are land reptiles scooting around. Half of 17x in Genesis, in psalms and numerous prophets generally as part of a list of

different kind of existing creatures (paralleling this account).

God made/fashioned (*asa* God made the firmament, the two lights, now the animals) and it was *tov* (*good, pleasant, agreeable*, good in a wide sense)

1:26 Let us make (make) *adam* (sounds like ahdahm). [Comes from verb root *adam* (sounds like ahdam). Root word means to be red, to redden, dyed red, flushed face) 10x generally dying materials, but Lamentations 4:7 speaks of the whiteness and ruddiness of the skin of the Hebrew princes.] The noun refers to generic man/humanity, or a man 552x/526v (apparently ancient Arabs thought there were two kinds of humans white (red) and black (Gesenius' Hebrew—Chaldee Lexicon) *adam* (noun, name of first man 11x/10v Genesis mostly 3-5, Hosea 6:7 and a city in Joshua 3;16 where the waters were dammed up so Israel could enter the promised land on dry ground) There are eleven other related words (mostly nouns and adjectives—including Edom-nation, Adamah-earth or ground, and the word for rubies.) First nineteen (both times in Genesis 1) uses refer to “the man” Gen 4:1 first appearance of “Adam” 3:20 after he names wife Eve.

*Tselem* (17x=*image, likeness, appearance, resemblance*). The ancient root was a shade, phantom, illusion, resemblance and by extension a representative figure like an idol—which was seen as vanity and a non-thing in Hebrew theology. Man is in the divine image 3x in Genesis, the 4<sup>th</sup> Seth in Adam's image, afterwards 7x pagan idols (twice for the mouse and tumors in 1 Samuel). In the ANE,

it was understood that the idols mediated the presence of the gods, and the King was a human image of god. “Divinity of human monarchs” was widespread, and Genesis turns it on its head by claiming humanity, and every human being, is the image of God—the divine dwelling. Hence, Christian claims that we are Temples of the Holy Spirit are actually a development of creation, more to come in Genesis 2!

*Demesh=likeness (19/25 total), similitude, resemblance, shape, manner.* Concentrated in Genesis [5:1,3 (twice each, God made man in His likeness, and Adam produced a son in his likeness) and over a dozen in Ezekiel’s heavenly visions which are loaded with similes in chapters 1, 8 & 10 Daniel 10:16 (one in the likeness of a son of man touched my lips). Isaiah asks, “with whom will you liken God, or what likeness compare Him? To an idol?” (40:18-19) (*pesel* graven image from verb *pasal* ‘to carve’) which emphasizes the amazing declaration of human in the divine likeness)

1:27 The word *bara* (create) used three times. God creates man in His image. In the image of God, He created him (singular). “Male and Female” He created them (plural). Male (*zakar* 82/80; from the root for ‘remember, recall, remind’ (e.g. Genesi 8:1; 9:15-16 God remembers Noah and His covenant through rainbow) man. Ironically, the next mention of males will also be Noah’s ark when he is told to collect the animals, male and female. Gen 17 numerous times around circumcision requirement. Will appear many times in Leviticus around sacrifices and priesthood and Numbers concerning the tribal census. Female. (*nek-ay-vah* woman or girl 22/22) from root *nakav*—to bore, to pierce, to hollow out; to specify or single out; blaspheme or curse.

Once again, we see repeated times in ark stories. Leviticus a dozen (peace offering male or female, sin offering female sheep or goat) Leviticus 27 value of males and females fluctuated based on age. [needs to be seen as an actuarial assessment of financial value rather than the intrinsic worth of a human being]

1:28 (&22skipped over this earlier) blessed (barak) and said “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (waters)” God does not do this with the land animals, just sea creatures (and air?)

Fruitful *para* (*fruitful, bear fruit, branch out; increase*) It is a verb and a primitive root PRH (29x/28v) Key connection to salvation history Genesis 1 creation, Flood 8:17 as they leave the ark God declares all living things, crawlers, birds, crawlers (according to their kind!) “*swarm on the earth and be fruitful and multiply*” 9:1, 7 Blesses Noah’s family “*be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth*” & “*be fruitful, multiply, swarm* (*saras-Genesis Exodus 1*)

*Mala fill, be full, satisfy, accomplish, complete* verb 250x/242v. Genesis 1:22, 1:28 “fill the earth” Next appearance 6:11, 13 “the earth was corrupt and filled with violence.” 9:1 Noah (creation reset: be fruitful and multiply and fill het earth)

*Kabash* (verb root. 15x/13v) subject, subdue, force, bring into bondage; violate, dominate, tread down. Literally to tread with the feet. Numbers 32:22, 29 Israel will “conquer the land.” Joshua 18:1; 2 Sam 8:11 David defeated nations, Esther 7:8 Haman accused of sexual assault when he falls on the queen’s couch in dread. Jeremiah 34: 11, 16 two references to the sin of forcing people into slavery.

Zechariah 9:15 The Lord of Heaven's army will protect His people, they will defeat their enemies by throwing great stones... (lots of blood and bloodshed)"

*Rada* (root verb 27x *to tread down* as in a wine press) rule 14x, dominion 9x, take, prevail, reign. Leviticus 25 three times, God forbids Israelites be enslaved/treated harshly by other Israelites. Lev 26:7 God threatens that Israel will be conquered and maltreated if unfaithful. Numbers 24:19 Balaam prophecies that Israel will trample down and destroy Edom. Judges 5:13 Twice in Deborah's song of victory—God used a remnant to gain "dominion over the nobles and dominion over the mighty ones." 1 Kings Solomon's dominion, also three times the supervisor over the work teams (perhaps an allusion to Hebrew slave days?) Multiple psalms, 110: "The Lord will extend your reign from Jerusalem, you shall rule over your enemies." Isaiah 14:2, 6; 41:2 God promises a reversal of fortunes Israel will take and enslave her captors and rule over her oppressors. & 14:6 the Lord breaks the staff of the wicked and the scepter of rulers that struck down the people with wrath and unceasing blows. 41:2 Messiah "He delivers up nations to him, and tramples kings under foot..." Jeremiah 5:31 the cruel misrule of the priests

This extends over every fish of sea, bird of air, (*chay*) living being that (creeps/moves/glides) across the earth. It would not appear to have been an established fact but more a task to be accomplished. This impacts your "Eden narrative" and assumptions about life before the Fall—all good in every way, or struggle and challenges as part of the situation. As we read the rest of the Jewish Scriptures more closely as theological narratives (rather than straight

history or moral instruction) we will see repeating patterns (with unique twists) which aim to **reveal** more and more the goals and activities of the Lord (YHWH)

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## IMAGE and LIKENESS in New Testament

*Eikon* (from verb *eiko*—to resemble or be like. *Image, figure, likeness* literally, a statue or profile, figuratively, representation, resemblance). Only appears once in the Gospel, in the story about paying taxes to Caesar Mt/Mk/Lk all three “show me a coin, whose likeness and inscription is this?” Romans 1:29 refers to debase humans worshipping images of men or animals. Romans 8:29 For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed (*symmorphous*; also *Philippians 3:21* ‘*who will change our lowly body to be like His glorious body*’) to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the first born within a large family.” 1 Corinthians 11:7 (why men do not cover heads) man is the image and glory of God, woman the glory of man 1 Cor 15:49 “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.” 2 Cor 3:18 “And all of us with unveiled face, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror (*kataprizo* hapax), are being transformed (*metmorphoo*; 4x Mt/Mk Jesus transfigured, Romans 12:2 “don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing [*anakainosis kainos=new*] of your minds [*nous*]” 2 Cor 4:4 The Gospel is veiled to those who are perishing because the “god of this world” has blinded their minds— “to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the IMAGE of God.” Colossians 1:15 “He is the image of the invisible God, the first born (unique, primary) of all creation” Colossians 3:10 strip off the old

self, “have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the IMAGE of its Creator” which eradicates our social and racial divisions. Revelation has eight references to “the Beast and its image.”

LIKENESS *omoites* 4 times (LXX Gen 1:11, 12) Hebrews 4:15 a high priest “like us” who has been tempted as us but did not sin,” 7:15 “another priest rises in the likeness of Melchizedek.” *Omoiosis* James 3:9 The tongue blesses the Lord and Father, and curses people made in the image of God.

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Some Church Fathers differentiated the image as a status (freedom, creativity) and the likeness as the life of virtue which molded us to God. The Hebrew is not so sharply differentiated as that, but as is always the case with two synonyms there are different nuances of meaning. This sort of pairing is a common Hebrew style of writing. Sometimes it is complementary pairs which indicate an entirety (day and night, heaven and earth, earth and sea). Reading the Jewish bible you will quickly notice how words and entire phrases are paired to communicate.

GENESIS 1: 29-30

Immediately we see that parallelism in v29 on trees that bear fruit with seeds. *Zera zara*(seed-bearing seed) *es* (tree) are repeated twice, *oklah* (root verb—to devour; food, devour, be devoured [Gen 4x, Ezekiel 9x people of Israel being devoured total 18x] The original diet of man and beast is seed bearing plants and trees. This will be reworked with Noah (Creation 2.0) where consuming animals will be added to human menu. The relationship of

humans to animals is generally supposed to be governed by kindness and compassion. The ideal ruler (a good king) reflects the gracious mercy-kindness of the Creator Divine King. There is no command to be vegetarian, but in reality, the diet of the ancient Jews did not include much meat. While the small group of the elite had access to meat; aside from a major feast, like Passover, or perhaps an important family event, the agrarian and working poor did not. They typically ate two sparse meals a day (late morning and evening) consisting of grains, olives, grapes, and ground vegetables. So, the Noah reference is more theological than it is a practical guide to meal preparation, something we will look at when we arrive in chapter nine.

Genesis 1:31 *me'od (exceedingly) tov (good, better, best, well, pleasing, beautiful, precious, favorable, appropriate)* God sees the goodness. The great debate centers on whether the world is still very good? Judaism does not have a developed theology of the fall of creation

### **Day 7 Finished**

2:1 finished (*kala*—"to cease or be completed" accomplish, cease, consume, end, fail, finish, accomplish, complete, spent, used up 205x) used in both verse 1&2; another example of Hebrew repetition. Note the parallelism between beginning of creation and the end.

*Tsava* 486x (*host; army, warriors, army—God's angels, human army, 'sun, moon, stars,' or all creation; service, hardship worship*) Heaviest use in Numbers, Chronicles, Isaiah. The luminaries // gods in the sky, the vegetation of the earth, the creatures of sea, land, air

2:2 *melakah* (from the root for messenger, ie, angel. *Work, business, occupation, service*) work which He had made (*asa*)

*Shabat* (71x *cease* 47x) repose, desist from labor. Later in the Torah there will be a strong emphasis on Sabbath and rest day. In the NT, Jesus will be confronted about His healing practice on Sabbath. Jesus does not reject Sabbath, He offers an alternate interpretation of the Law. He makes it about giving life but also ties it to His divine mission and relationship! See Mt 12:1-7 (Sabbath 8x). Luke 13 & 14 add two other accounts. John 5, 7, 9 [5:17 “My Father is still working and I am still working] See Exodus 20:8—11 where the rationale for the Sabbath commandment to rest is tied to creation (Deuteronomy 5:15 is more existential and justice oriented, remember that you were a slave in Egypt...the Lord brought you out; ..commanded you to keep the Sabbath)

Gen 2:3 *Barak* God blesses for the third time (birds&fish, humans, the day). It is a consecration of time. He makes it *kadash* (173x *to be clean, consecrated, holy, dedicated/set apart, sanctified*) Exodus 13:2 God will consecrate the first-born son. Exodus 19:10, 14, 22-23 all the people (they will wash their garments), later the priests. Ex 20:8-11 “keep” Sabbath Holy, God made it holy. Ex 28ff priest, altar, tent and furniture will all be consecrated.

*Shabat* (*ceased*) two recurring terms in the creation: *bara* (*fashioned, formed* 4v) *asa* (*work, produce* 9v)

**2:4 these are the generations of the heavens and the earth: their being created.**

## **Creation from another angle GENESIS 2**

Tow-led-ah (descendants, results, proceedings) Except here, always in reference to family lineage, so only found in books concerned with family tree: Genesis, Numbers, Exodus, Ruth and 1 Chronicles. Here generations is meant to convey the idea of the beginning of all that follows.

The first half of Genesis 2:4 is probably not part of the original story as it would disrupt the pattern of seven (Jewish Study Bible). Because the number seven is associated with completeness in the Ancient Near East, The Jewish Scriptures and Christian Writings often have patterns of seven (check out the Apocalypse to really see) Seven days, God sees seven times, the word ‘elohim/GOD’ occurs 35x (5x7) and He speaks thirty five words on day seven.

2:4b “In the day...” begins a new sentence with a new context. “Earth and Heaven” (ertez and samayim—same words) are reversed here and there will be a greater focus on the earth rather than sky or sea. God *asa (made)* is the same verb found 7x in first account (plus twice applied to trees/vegetation), however, there is one difference. The subject of the action is *YHWH Elohim*. The name YHWH (related to the verb “to be”) is a specific “name/title” and here it is coupled with the generic word for God which was previously used in chapter 1. The stylistic change and the different verbiage are seen as reasons to postulate two different stories/authors are being brought together. There is also a discrepancy with the Genesis 1 creation timeline. On Day 3 the vegetation vegetation, while here there is no bush [*see-ahk 4x total, including Hagar story, 2x Job.*] or

*esev* (used in Gen1:11-12, 29-30) refers to herbs, translated grasses, vegetation on the (*saday*) field, plain, flatlands. Obviously, the ancient compilers of the Scriptures were able to see what we see. So let us PAUSE.

[**excursus** If the Bible is God’s revealed truth, then we are invited to hear this and ponder what GOD is communicating to us in these two dissimilar accounts. If our inclination is to immediately seek to find a way to twist the texts and make it fit factually, then we are not listening and hearing, we are defending a position. Some may ask, “How can the Bible be true if both of these statements contradict?” Others say, “The Bible truly reveals God’s word, so what is this different story telling me?”

[It is a story, so perhaps we should read and enjoy it and discover its internal congruity without reference to the details of Genesis 1 and our compulsive desire to create answers for questions which may not matter? Hear (*shema*) Israel! is the greatest commandment of God. Let us hear.]

Sadly, Richard Friedman (Torah p16f) makes clear, we cannot hear the multiple puns. Frequently the author employs *metathesis* (rearrangement of the root letters. E.g. “Elvis is evil, he lives a vile life.” “I took a nap in the pan.”) E,g, *terem* (not yet) and *himtir* (rain). *Ed, adam, Adamah* (river, man, ground)

Gen 2:5 The dry conditions (the word *matar/rain* makes its first appearance in the Bible) preclude vegetation. The situation here is more reflective of Israel’s actual climate. This story resonates with their physical circumstance. Genesis 1 (which we saw may be corrective of the ANE pagan creation myths) has too much water—yet really both

sea and desert are barren, waste, so sacramentally they both convey the same idea—chaos or “emptiness.” In the ancient view, disorder is non-being (rather than existence/non-existence), so here the Lord provides a Divine water source and the ‘*adam*’ to ‘create’ a relational, ordered, living world.

There is an *ed* (*mist*; only twice in Bible, here and Job 36:27) which serves to water the earth. The author is providing a visual image of what the world looked like before the creation of the *adam*.

There is a verbal word play between *adam/human* and *Adamah/soil-earth*. Humans *abad-work, till* the earth. The word *abad* primarily means to serve. This encompasses the work of slaves/servants and Levitical/priestly functions 227x/290 total (till 9x, servant 5x, worship 5x).

In Genesis, the word is repeated for Adam’s role, and Cain also works the ground; but when he kills Abel (the shepherd) the ground “will no longer yield” to him and he will wander. The word occurs frequently in the Jacob cycle to describe his labor/servitude to Laban. In Exodus 1 it is used of the Hebrew slave labor to Egypt. In Ex 8:1 God says to Pharaoh, “let my people go into the desert to serve me (worship)” so the question emerges “who will you serve? Serving YHWH or serving another ‘god/human ruler’ will yield different results (share in royal nature or being an underling, even a slave)

The process of creation uses pottery language. God forms *\*yasar\** (63x total=*form* 26x, *potter* 7x, *fashion* 5x; *frame or make*) the *adam from the dust* (*afar—dry earth, dust, mortar, debris*) [Uses of dust—after the sin, in 3:19 God will

declare to the *adam* “*you are dust and to dust you shall return.*” In Gen 3:14 God tells the serpent that it shall “eat dust.” Gen 13:16//28:14 has a more positive spin (promise to Abraham that his descendants shall be as dust on the earth, too many to count)] of the *Adamah* (*ground, red clay*) the Lord *nafak* (*blows, breathes*) into the *af* (*nose, nostril, face*; most often *anger/wrath* because of heavy breathing) and the *adam* becomes *chay* (*life*) *nefesh* (*soul 475x, life 117x, person 27x, mind 15x, heart 15x, creature 9x, body 9x*; refers also to passions, desires, emotions. It can also refer to the dead. It is associated with the throat or open mouth). So God’s breath into a dust body creates a living being. This illustrates the human condition. It is not called the image of God, but there is a creature/creation mixture going on.

In Greek stories, Prometheus created man out of earth (mud), and the goddess Athena breathed life into his creation. Here we see another common pattern repeating in ancient creation myths - the spirit is given to the body so that it will become alive.

2:8 The Lord (YHWH God) plants (*nawtah—to plant, set something upright, affix*) next 3 Noah plants a vineyard, Abraham plants a tree, and Exodus 15 “you will plant them in the Mount of your possession, the sanctuary you established, i.e. Temple) a gan (in Greek *paradiso*) *a garden*. The word occurs 12x in the Adam/Eve story Genesis 2&3 qedem (*east*)

*Eden* [Ezekiel 28:13 “you were in Eden the garden of God...14andyou resided on God’s holy mountain”] Eden was the whole mountain with a Garden on the east side.

For the Ancients, mountains are associated with gods, the “high places” mentioned regularly in SS. The Temple was on a mountain, the ziggurats were manmade mountains which served as temples [The nature of the Babel pagan religion can be deduced from an examination of the similar pagan forms of worship that accompanied the worldwide ziggurats: snake worship, sun and moon worship, obscene fertility rites, worship of multiple gods and goddesses, human sacrifice and more. The cultic sacrifices were meals—so whatever was sacrificed was also eaten. The mythic stories and sacramental understanding of physicality (the unseen realm is manifest in time and space through physical persons, places and things) is non-rationalistic, non-materialistic. It may seem child-like to us as it is more poetic than prosaic, intuitive than concrete. Or maybe it will seem deeper to us?

Because the gods dwelt in gardens, the human gods—royalty—had gardens as well. Well-ordered and luxuriant, they were the opposite of chaos and desert. Remember, the holy land is pretty arid. In Europe, I visited some of the great gardens which were around royal palaces; it makes sense that only the wealthy could afford such luxury. The garden of Eden is also a model for the Jewish Temple. Paradise is associated with the heavenly realm//afterlife (this day you will be with Me in paradise, said Jesus on the cross). Hence the “gardener” *adam* would have a royal, priestly function. It was a place where the human encountered the divine.

[excursus: Mountains and gardens continue to play a role in not just the Jewish Scriptures but also the New Testament. For example, in Matthew, Jesus is tested by

Satan on a mountain, later Jesus climbs mountains to pray, to teach, He is transfigured on a mountain, and at the end of the end of the Gospel He gathers the disciples and ascends from a mountain. In addition, recall Jesus is in a garden to face His temptations and later is buried in one (John). Mary Magdalene thinks the risen Lord is a gardener—probably a “narrative theological” reference to creation account and the New Adam theology (which is more systematically developed in St. Paul).]

Gen 2:9 In verse 5 nothing had spouted up, here God *tsamach* causes springing up, growth. Trees *ates* (*tree, timber, branch, stick, wood*). Pleasant *Khamad* (*desire, pleasing, in bad sense covet, lust, idolatry, any disordered longing*—e.g. Eve, Dtn 5:21 “Thou shalt not covet...” to the sight and good for food (sight and food are first appearance of each Hebrew word). This is a wonderful place, and in Genesis 3 this imagery will be twisted in the story of Eve as she is tempted and sins. Evil is perversion of good.

(Keep in mind the temple) the *tawvek=midst, middle* are two trees. This same term describes the firmament separating the waters above and below in Genesis 1. The tree of Life (*chay*)

[Excursus Jewish religion refers to the Torah as the tree of life, and tree imagery is popular in ordinary and mystical strains of their religion. It does appear in the Sacred Scripture in three books. “Tree of Life” is twice more in Genesis 3:22, 24. Proverbs 3:18 say Wisdom is the tree of life, as is the “Fruit of righteousness (lawlessness takes life away). The fulfillment of desire and a gentle tongue are also the tree of life. Four times in the Apocalypse. Rev 2:7 (To

him who conquers I will grant to eat the tree of life which is in the paradise of God). In the middle of the street of the city; also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its 12 different kinds of fruit’—one each month, for the healing of the nations. 22:14 Blessed are those who wash their robes , that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Rev 22:19 anyone who takes away from the words of this book, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city.

The idea that the Cross is the Tree of Life finds its roots in several verses. Act 13:23 and 1 Peter 2:24 both refer to the crucifixion as “the tree.” Acts 5:30 and 10:39 “a tree” Deuteronomy 21:23 ‘cursed is the one hung from a tree’ quoted by Paul in Galatians 3:13]

Knowledge (*da’ath* knowledge, skill, perception, wisdom, cunning.) knowledge is broader, experiential and transcends mere memorization of data. This another Hebrew pairing to cover “everything” *tov* (good) and bad/evil (like day/night, land/sea, old/young, etc.)

#### Genesis 2:10-14 River

This seems to come out of nowhere, and two of the rivers are unknown. The river waters the garden, so it is a source of renewal, then it breaks apart/splits into four. This may be an image expressing the idea that Eden is the source of life (symbolic, ancient approach is about meaning!), rather than an actual geography map (modern is concerned with data, facts, details). Remember, science can analyze water

but it cannot discern baptism, and our language of rebirth or washing away sins is not less symbolic! It is noteworthy that much of the vocabulary here are words appearing for the first time, perhaps another indication of a different author's hand at work. The river Euphrates appears three more times in Genesis, the first (15:18) is the promise of the land between the Euphrates and the River of Egypt (Nile).

*Pishon (increase. Another break apart, scatter)* there are some reasons to think it refers to the Indus River in India. The Nile (Samaritans) and Ganges (Josephus' theory) are also offered as possibilities. Sirach 24:25 mentions it in an analogy about wisdom, but offers no other insights. The precise location of *Havilah* is unknown, however 10:7 (// 1 Chron 1:9) The son of Noah—Cush—has a son Havilah and 10:29 (// 1 Chron 1:23; a son of Joktan). In a pair of geographic references: Gen 25:18 Ishmael's descendants “dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt as you go to Assyrian and 1 Samuel 15:7 “Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt.” The land contains gold (*zawhab*, 389x), bdellium (*bedolak*. 2x Numbers 11:7 the manna looks like bdellium) and onyx *shoham* (11x some type of *precious stone, probably onyx*. It appears in Exodus (6x) as one of the 12 stones on the priest's breast plate. Ezekiel 28:13 also mentions it in the litany of precious stones in the Garden of Eden, where he compares the King of Tyre to Adam's original state and sin, and Ezekiel tells us that Eden was on a mountain) Friedman points out that the root consonants are also found in the Hebrew (they became

a living soul—*nefesh*), there are other verbal puns with other rivers.

*Gihon* “bursting forth” (the snake will be cursed to crawl on its *gehon/belly*) circles *Cush* (Ethiopia) so some think it means the Nile. There is also a pool near Jerusalem mentioned five times (1 K, 2 Ch) with this name. A spring or stream.

Tigris and Euphrates are well known, parallel rivers (Mesopotamia literally means “between the water”). Babylon (modern day Iraq) was one of the great empires of the Ancient Near East. The letters of Euphrates are also in the snake curse while tigris letters are in a word at story’s end 3:22. While this may seem a stretch for most of us, close reading of the Hebrew demonstrates the almost constant use of interconnected words.

Genesis 2:15-17 Reveals the task of the human and the command about the tree. Whatever else this story ‘unveils,’ it reveals a pattern to be repeated throughout the Bible in reference to individuals, families, and the nation. This cannot be ignored for the sake of concerns about historical Adam.

*Yanak* (967x; took) and *lakak* (75x; put) the *adam* in the Garden (*gan/paradiso*). Both verbs first appearance in Bible.

*Awbad* 290x (work, serve, labor. Used of slaves, domestic underlings and also Levitical/priestly) Adam will work the land (Cain also works the land). Gen 15:13 prophecy to Abram of future slavery. In Exodus there is a verbal play

(over a dozen) with serving YHWH vs serving Pharaoh/Egypt. The Book of Numbers is full of usage for the Levites in the worship. So the term is ambiguous

*Shamar* (from primitive root to hedge around, as with thorns, to protect and guard. *keep, guard, heed, watch, observe*. The usage of this term is interesting. Cain will ask, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” in a sense rejecting the human vocation of “keeping.” The next time (17:9), God instructs Abram to “keep my covenant,” and this will be another key meaning for the term in the Jewish Bible. (17:10; 26:5) Gen 28 in the Jacob cycle it is used of God “I will keep you; keep me in your ways.” In Exodus the term frequently is used as “keep my commandments,” etc.

2:16 *tsava* first time used (494x *command, charge, give an order*). Used of God’s commands as well as human authority. The will of God is not arbitrary, but aligned with human well being.

*Akal* (*eat, devour*) *eat eat* used twice, in Hebrew doubling the word serves as an emphatic, so translated as ‘freely eat’. The command is to eat almost anything (Brueggeman connects this to 1 Cor 6:12; 10:23 Paul’s admonition “all things are lawful” in reference to dietary law). The sense of grace and provision is powerful, especially in a garden which had such a high standing in the ancient imagination. The intent of creation is for the human good.

2:17 Why are they forbidden to eat tree of knowledge of good and evil? The consequence, death, is not a punishment. This is a warning. The high pace of wisdom in the bible implies that this is not about knowledge, but how knowledge is achieved. Contemporary society is blessed

and cursed by knowledge (is nuclear power good or bad?). Technology is ambiguous, used for a mix of purposes. Humans are called to trust God. Perhaps it's a reminder that we should receive it on God's terms not try to take it on our own terms. Narrative theology is not straightforward and lots of interpretations are possible. These are meditation texts rather than answers. Don't eat the fruit is different from explaining why.

The expression "on the day you eat it you shall die" will not mean immediately, rather on the day you break confidence, your mortality is assured. More on this in chapter 3.

Genesis 2:18-25 "not good"

While seven times God sees the creation is good (culminating in very good) in this account there is the opposite declaration.

Excursus: what is your theory of the original situation? What is the "story" which consciously (or subconsciously) shapes your view of then vs. now? Were things perfect? Was there no work, no challenges, no struggle? Were human beings immortal and healthy, the world a peaceful place devoid of problems? Or was the Garden/Paradiso a contained area of heightened beauty and goodness within a special area (the mountain of Eden) while the world was more similar to what we see now? Was Eden a place of prosperity—more cooperative, more abundance, fertility and good health? Was it like the beginning of "the Kingdom of God" on earth and were the humans supposed to expand that Divine Rule (as the image of God)? In the latter view theologically, the idea of Israel or the Church resonates. The Israel/church (Temple is Garden, Jerusalem, even all

Israel is Eden) connection then helps us to understand the New Jerusalem which comes as a Bride out of Heaven. Because, of course, Eden is a gift of God, we cannot build the Kingdom of God (only cooperate and receive it). The idea that Israel is to be the new Eden is most obvious in the amazing promises of Deuteronomy.

.....

Deuteronomy 7:12-26 (blessing and curse) “He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground (grain, wine, oil, cattle, flock...fertility) 7:15 “The Lord will turn away from you every illness” See also Dtn 11, 28 where the stunning blessings and threats are so graphic. Genesis 2:21-25 Deep sleep (tardayma occurs 7x. Gen 15:12, After the covenant sacrifice (where he chases off birds of prey), at nightfall Abraham falls into a deep sleep, horror and great darkness fall upon him; and God speaks and then a burning pot passes through the sacrificed animals—needless to say we will look into that passage!) 1 Sqm 26:12 David sneaks into Saul’s camp and steals his spear, God had cast a deep sleep on the soldiers. Job 4:13 (a word came stealing to me, my ear received the whisper of it Amid thoughts from visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on mortals, dread came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake, a spirit glided past my face...it speaks: ‘is anyone righteous before God?’ Job 33:15 God speaks ... in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on mortals while they slumber on their beds...” Proverbs 19:15 laziness casts one into deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger. Isaiah 29:10 “For the Lord has pouted out upon you a spirit of deep sleep; He has closed your eyes, you prophets and covered your heads, you seers.”

All previous “helpers” were created from the ground as the adam, but why is the woman not formed directly in the same way? This question is not asked, nor is it answered (as I see it). Is this simply “divine anesthesia before the divine surgery”? The symbolic meaning of ‘deep sleep’ is hinted at by other appearances of the word in the Bible.

What is the connection to dying and losing before receiving?

[“Sleep” Ps 13:3 “sleep the sleep of death.” 1 Kings 12:2 David slept with his fathers. Repeated for nine other kings who died, starting with Solomon. Jesus says the little girl is not dead, she is asleep, and Jn 11:11 that our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep. Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” 1 Corinthians 15:20

With other vocabulary connections to genesis; Daniel 12:2 Many who sleep in the dust (apar) of the earth (adama) will wake, to everlasting life. This does not mean Adam must be understood as literally dead, although the process seems to indicate something similar to that. However, theologically, it is a revelation of the biblical pattern of death/resurrection; of leaving what was behind (a pattern we will see often in Genesis) in order to find what one is seeking.]

Ehad (957x one 687x, first 36x, another 35x, any 8x, every 10x, certain 9x) selah (41x side 19x, chamber 11x, boards/beams 4x, ribs 2x) Some think this means the whole side of the man was split, others think it is a single rib. In either case, the understanding is the body, like a building, has supportive structures and it is this which God removed and used to build up the body of the woman. There is no description of what adam was required to undergo—a rebuild, a permanent lacking/missing rib? Each invites us to ponder the cost of companionship. Interesting, the word for one occurs here and in the following verse about two shall be one—the many from the one and the one from the many. In human reproduction, biological science says that man and woman contribute some of their own DNA to provide for a new life. Deeper spiritual meaning?

## WOMAN

Genesis 2:23 God takes “the rib” and bana/builds an issha (woman) from the ‘adam. The response of Adam is written in Hebrew poetry, and the word man (ish) is a companion word to issha. The bone/flesh connection drives home the literal physical unity of the companion. The poetic exaltation communicated the joy of Adam. She is flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone. She is out of him and issha to his ish.

2 Sam 5:1 at Hebron they told David, “We are your bone and flesh” (19:12, 19:13 use same expression). Flesh is often used as a term for human existence and human beings in general. The bones are often all that remain of the deceased (e.g. Joseph’s bones are transported from Egypt).

Some church Fathers connected the procession of Eve from the side of Adam to the water/blood flowing from the side of the crucified Christ—which is the church. The church Father Ireneaus (130-202. A bishop, he had met Polycarp, the bishop martyr thought to have known the disciple John) calls Mary the New Eve and Jesus the New Adam in his theological writings. There is a wealth of such reflections which bind the Christian Scriptures to the Ancient texts of Israel. It is no exaggeration to say that one could spend many pages on some verses and their interpretation in the Fathers.

Al ken (therefore therefore) the author provides an etiology (the cause of something else) which explains the meaning of the story. In most narratives, we will not be provided such an application. Genesis (the speaker is not identified) declares that the creation of the woman is such that, the man will leave behind/abandon his own parents and cling/cleave to his wife. As typically the woman left her family to join the husband’s family. In actual practice, it seems most ancient Jewish men had a single wife (he polygamy in the Bible is among the Patriarchs—and as we will see has unpleasant outcomes—and the monarchs—which includes their political ramifications. A bridal price was paid to the father/family (as financial return on the loss of a contributing member of the family) and this soon gave way to the practice of the father sharing the dowry with his daughter (failure to do so reflected poorly on the man)

In the current crisis around sexual identity, sex roles, marriage and the like, this brief text from Genesis is frequently twisted or criticized from the modern, political perspective of the reader. WE pause for a brief excursus to Jesus’ use of the text.

[excursus In Matthew 19, Jesus will refer to this passage when Pharisees are “testing” Him with a question: “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?” Jesus responds “What God has joined, let no one separate.”

The follow up question is “Why did Moses allow divorce?” And the stunning response, “because your hearts were hard.” What does that mean about interpreting SS?

I have reflected on the divorce readings elsewhere. Human existence is complex and there is great joy and great pain in family life.

I think it best to see Genesis offering us a positive story. God made complementary sexes for the purpose of abating the isolation of the original man. Maybe these words from the Episcopal wedding service can provide a fit conclusion:

Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored among all people.

The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

Ephesians 5 begins with an admonition “be subject to one another, wives be subject to your husbands” and proceeds to speak of the husbands love for his wife and the model of Christ and the church. The model of servant leadership (Jesus the foot washer) was lost on the pagan West and the church afterwards has retained a distorted view of power and authority. There is no indication of subservience in the

creation of Eve. We have already seen that “help” does not mean “hired help, maid or servant” and Adam is not declared Lord over the woman. Sadly, things change in the next chapter...]

Genesis 2:25 they are both *awrome* (naked, bare, nude) which comes from the root word *awram* (which means wise, crafty, subtle and is used to describe the serpent). The verbal connection serves as a bridge. There is the same relationship as *adam adama*. The term is rare, occurring 16x and the next one is Saul prophesying naked. The third appearance, in Job (naked I came forth from the womb and naked I return) may have creation echoes. In several cases it refers to abject poverty or desolation.

Shame *boosh* (ashamed<sup>72</sup>, shame 9; confounded<sup>21</sup>), Once more reflection material. Symbol of Innocence and openness; one thinks of a young child? The contrast to the Noah story is striking. There Ham sees Noah’s *erva* (nakedness, also shame) which results in a curse. Is this a function of post-Fall world? Perhaps, but the Fall does not play heavily in Jewish thought, nor is there a developed, overt theology within the Bible on that subject.

### **Excursus male & female**

[The humans are *ish* and *issha*, male and female. The woman is not a helpmate and we cannot fall into the belief that the bible sees woman as a lesser servant. The ancient world had an established hierarchy and women were not equal to me, a source of much agitation among contemporary women. Two things about this. First, the Christ makes clear that He is Lord and has come as one who serves. He told the apostles that “the greatest among you is the one who serves.” Mary said “he has cast down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly” (one of myriad eschatological reversals). Modern people,

including most modern Christians, have adopted the value system of anti-Christ in their discussions about power. This is especially true in the “war between the sexes” which is raging among us. Secondly, we will see that in the Genesis accounts the male/female hierarchy is often flipped on its head—as is the primacy of the first born which we will see over and over again in Genesis. Arguably, the central role of the woman in the Fall is an example. Much like Jesus’ appearance to Mary Magdalene, the fact that a woman is front and center in such a pivotal moment (while Adam passively follows along) serves at some level to undermine the operating assumptions of culture of the time. If women don’t matter why does she matter so much. Tune in to see how the wives of the patriarchs also flip this assumption upside down.

In reading the text, remember that Male and Female are also symbols of the bipolarity of reality expressed as masculine/feminine. Sex refers to the biological male and female, while gender (masculine and feminine) has to do with the meaning of things. In many languages nouns have genders (Spanish “el” and “la”) and sometimes this betrays the ancient understanding of reality. Heaven is masculine, earth is feminine (water falls on the earth, the earth brings forth growth) in Spanish. The story of Adam is multilayered. He is humanity, but also a man, yet his story is a pattern for individuals, a community, a nation. The same is true of Eve. Remember the early church understood Jesus and Mary in terms of Adam and Eve. Ancient and Biblical worldview is the balancing of heaven and earth, masculine and feminine, spirit and matter, ideal and actual, form and matter. It is pre-Scientific and has a

spiritual component. Seeing “through” he characters is vital if we are to encounter the deeper meaning. Moderns also see things in terms of power and oppression. The masculine/ideal is only realized in the feminine/actual. The soul is not superior to the body, without a body&soul the person is dead, or merely an idea. Sherlock Holmes is not real because he has no body, he is a no-body!]

### **Genesis 3**

“Good and Evil” are paired several times in this chapter. In the four other occurrences (Deuteronomy 1:39. 2 Sam 14:17. 1 K 3:9. Heb 5:14) it is always tied to maturity and growth in wisdom/understanding. This has led some to see the tree as a symbol of the path to maturity which will unfold in God’s time, and which the first parents sought to take control of on their own terms. The issue was timing. The sin is not trusting God would provide in due season the “fruits of the tree.” This deeper, symbolic meaning is of vital important and cannot be completely ignored if we are to encounter God’s message here.

A recurring theme in most commentaries is the application of the term “innocent” to Adam and Eve. Are they like children? The story is not detailed nor does it provide much psychological information. It is clearly a case of reading our assumptions into the text because there is so little there. However, as is always the case, job one is to read and hear the revelation. The Lord is not answering our questions, He is communicating to us what is useful for our salvation.

Chapter 3 is called the “fall.” The Jewish study Bible expresses a different understanding of the story (p18, footnote, v22-24). It points out that neither account of

creation portrays humankind is immortal. It references the Tree of Life (Lady Wisdom) remains available to those who seek it. It declares that the estrangement does not require a Messianic act of redemption to heal it—rather the practice of Torah is the antidote (the latter points are obviously at odds with our Christian beliefs).

About fifty years before the birth of Jesus, an Alexandrian Jew wrote the “Book of Wisdom” in Greek. The second chapter is a meditation on the righteous man and whether God will intervene in his innocent struggles. It is read in our church on Good Friday and resonates powerfully as a prophetic word about Jesus on the Cross. It continues with an assessment of the folly of evil men, who do not understand the purposes of the Lord, or the value of holiness and righteousness. Wisdom 2:24 says, *“for God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of His own eternity, but through the devil’s envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it.”* Part of the Apocrypha, many Christians do not recognize the work as Sacred Scripture, however, it apparently has influenced Christian thinking.

### The text Genesis 3:1

*Nawkash (serpent)*

*Mythology.net* Arabic mythology *bahamat (behemoth)* a large fish, sometimes a sea serpent, which sustains life in the watery chaos of the waters and mist beneath the cosmos. Paralleled in Hebrew, behemoth, which is a hippopotamus, (bull or elephant) “Bahamut interacts with a variety of other mythological creatures. The most notable among them are Kujata, the bull who stands on top of his head; Falak, the

snake who lives in the underworld beneath him; and Leviathan, the sea-creature with which he is to do battle on the Hebrew Day of Judgment.” Snakes (winged/dragons in China) figure heavily in mythology on every continent— (African) half human half snake had a role of creation, (Mayans) leading humans across the seas to their home. In Egypt: The serpent is associated with immortality and the gods in the Old and Middle Kingdom periods in Egyptian mythology. A snake was depicted on tombs carrying the Pharaoh off into the sky, to the land of the gods. The snake came to be a symbol of kingship around this time and appeared on the headdress of the Pharaohs. Greek and Roman mythology saw snakes as guardian spirits of altars (in which they were carved).

In the Jewish Bible, the noun *nawkash* comes from the verb *nawkash*, the root word means “to hiss, whisper a magic spell, or prognosticate. It is used of divination or reading signs and omens. It can also mean to observe diligently, learn by experience or fortune telling. The verb occurs 11x in 9 verses, three in Genesis (Genesis 44 Joseph has a cup used in divinization) Lev 19/Dtn 18 forbid fortune-telling and 2 Kings 17, 21 and 2 Chron 33 give narratives of the practice along with child sacrifice. The other times it means to learn by observation or experience. One could certainly see how the garden temptation would be an experiential education for the first couple, although the narrative is silent on their inner life.

The noun is more frequent, 31x in 28verses. The first five are in the Garden story, and the next will be in the 49<sup>th</sup> chapter where Jacob blesses his sons—Dan is called a viper which bites the horse’s heels so the rider falls off. (we will see that chapter in the far off future) In Exodus the staff of Moses becomes a serpent and in Numbers 21 (*nawkash* and *saraphs*) serpents bite the people. There are

mythic creation references in Job 26:3 and Isaiah 27:1 which refer to the “fleeing serpent,” which Isaiah also calls Leviathan.

In light of all this, even if it is an actual, physical creature, how are we to understand the literary meaning of the serpent? Christians often speak of satan tempting the first parents, and while a plain reading seems to negate that, looking at the verbal connections make it seem less of a stretch. The “simple snake” is not so simple when seen in terms of ancient texts within Israel and elsewhere. The primal battles with a serpent/dragon figure heavily in depictions of creation, and while the Genesis account is devoid of this full-blown mythological narration, this may be an indication that the reality is being addressed as humankind’s dilemma rather than all of creation! It is also noteworthy that talking animals (Balaam’s donkey aside) are not a common feature of the biblical text. The serpent is in stark contrast with what has gone on before and what will follow after. In symbolic world, a story operates on many levels at once (see John’s Gospel or the Apocalypse; a quick example is Paul’s explanation of “muzzling the ox” claiming it is really about paying ministers) so literal and figurative explanations, perhaps several, are both applicable simultaneously.

*Kol arum* (all, whole, everything, totally; very common word, over 5,400x), so the ‘completely/more’ ‘wise/clever’; shrewd, crafty, cunning—has both a good (Proverbs 8x) and bad (Job 2x) sense. We have already pointed out the verbal play (*arum/aram*) on naked//wise, and it will continue to resonate in the short story. Another theme is seeing-knowing, which in fact continues throughout the

scriptures. It happens so frequently that I once preached on how often the verb to see is connected to salvation and important historic moments in the Biblical narrative.

*Chay—living*, by extension translated as creature or beast; used several times in Genesis 1 account of creatures.

*Saday—spread out, hence open spaces of land, or a field.*

Beast of the field occurs several times in the naming sequences of chapter 2. The snake is called a beast of the field, which seems to emphasize the earthbound nature in contrast to some of the more symbolic/spiritual meanings we alluded to above. This raises a question about the other creatures and their level of intellectual and verbal function, something C. S. Lewis plays with in his Chronicles of Narnia series.

*Has the Lord God said that you shall not eat?*

*Awkal—eat, devour, consume.* Occurs 15x (chap 2 twice, chap 3 thirteen). Eating in the bible is often symbolic (for example a prophet eating the scroll/word of God, or John 6, the Bread of Life, where Jesus says eat my flesh). God's providence is expressed through food (The Exodus manna is the archetype). In the NT eucharist and the Lord's Prayer (daily bread), all remind us to be open to different angles on the meaning of the story.

Alter f.n. 2 "*A. E. Speiser has noted, the subordinate conjunction that introduces the serpent's first utterance does not have the sense of "truly" that most translations assign it, and is better construed as the beginning of a (false) statement that is cut off in midsentence by Eve's objection that the ban is not on all trees of the Garden. Others*

interpret it as a diversionary tactic, setting Eve up with a falsehood which sets her mind in the wrong direction.

Eve's response includes an addition— "do not touch." Scholars point out that this was not part of the initial command, although personally, based on other Biblical stories where additional words are added, it is unclear to me how to understand this. The Jewish Study Bible gives a positive spin, reminding the reader of the Jewish practice of building a fence around the commandments, a careful approach, not unlike the doctor the margins added to removing a cancer. It is erring on the side of caution. You can't eat it if you don't touch it, which is a commonsense idea. However, in an ancient rabbinic source the snake shakes the tree and the fruit falls. Some others point out Dtn 4 ("*you must neither add to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you*"). This dictate occurs elsewhere in the Bible (most notably the end of the Book of Revelation). Perhaps the genius of narratives such as this is that one can glean different lessons by approaching them with different points of view. Human language cannot fully contain God's word. The "big revelation" about human sin in Genesis 3 includes all manner of angles on sin and sins. So, the story sheds light on a widely diverse human experience. It conveys an "explanatory value" for the human condition, and serves also as a template for understanding the sin of Israel and the sins of each human, and the role of exile.

The serpent negates the divine command. This is rebellion in its simplest and most horrifying level. The all-powerful Creator God can be dismissed with a simple word of denial.

The choice of God to embrace weakness is the theology of the Cross. It is easy to miss all of that here. The Lord has reduced Himself to the human level (Philippians' emptied Himself) to interact with humans, and suffers the indignity of the human condition. One cannot overstate the number of times that God will give commands to Israel and they will not comply. These patterns are the primary connective tissue throughout both testaments. This "unveiling" (*apocalypse/revelation*) is the primary feature of Scripture. The symbolic nature of the communication allows it to have prophetic import. Meaning is not limited to a "once and only" but a web of interconnected stories which provide clues for understanding. This is a story about rebellion and unbelief, it is a broken trust—the characters are denying the reliability of the Word of God, which means denying His character as "Faithful and True" (Revelation 19:10 and the white horse).

**[Excursus** One recurring pastoral problem I deal with is the people who have lost of faith in young adulthood. A common barrier to faith is the idea of a "literal, historic Adam and Eve." It is interesting that modern minds draw the line there—whether modernist Christians or modernist non-Christians.

In my mind, the sparse nature of the stories is relevant in determining the answer to the question, and the author's (human and divine) purpose in the communication.

Whatever the actual historical nature of the first parents, there can be no doubt that the story has symbolic meaning (whether their literal lives or their story lives, or both!).

However, more to my point, no one ever focuses on the main point of the story, which is sin. I have never been

asked, “You don’t think Genesis’ illustration of sin is real, do you?” no one seems to question whether human choices impacted the world and future generations. If they don’t buy into the “Deceiver/Adversary” image (serpent) they never challenge my belief about the reality of disobedience, sin and alienation?

We should ponder if reading Lord of the Rings is a foolish, and we should just read history. Children should not be read to out of the Chronicles of Narnia, they are fantasies and untrue, instead read the newspaper to them (one which you trust, of course). But there is a question: Is truth only found in biological humans, or can literary characters be revelatory?

It is no exaggeration to say the more deeply I read, study and pray with these texts, the less interest I have in finding a concrete time and place to set them, nor do I have any interest in arguing about facticity and historicity which keeps the salvific process of me entering the story and the story entering me from happening.

*3:5 your eyes will be open, you will be like gods and you will know good and bad.*

In the wider context of Genesis 1 (image and likeness of God) this is a particularly awful temptation. The idol/images were understood to serve as “bodies” (physical locations) of the gods, which humans served in temples. In Genesis 1 humans are the image, and in Genesis 2 humans are the caretakers of the Garden, which is the archetype of the Temple (beautiful place to encounter God). Perhaps our human destiny (Orthodoxy calls it *theosis*) is at play. Once again, being like gods is our future calling,

but the first humans are impatient, and manifest a lack of trust in God.

\**Ahyin* “Eyes” 887x (KJV translated as 495x eye, 216x sight; 19x seem, 12x color, 11x fountain, 11x well, 10x face, 14x please/8x displeased. 4x think 66x other).

Generally, it is both the physical eyes, mental states, faculties or process, things that appear, and places where water comes forth.

\**pawkach* “to open” (in particular open the eyes or ears; observe). First two occurrences here, frequently God (Jer 32, Dan 9 & Zech 12) or humans open eyes to see/observe something. More to our text is God’s desire to open our eyes—which may be literal or figurative. I believe the Garden Account is providing us a template of later patterns found in the Apocalypse (Lamb/Ram, Women/Whore, Mark of Christ/Beast). Anti-Christ is a Rebel and Fake which stands in opposition as a failed attempt to duplicate the Divine. God is the source of Wisdom (a tree) but the forbidden Tree of Knowing is a counterfeit. God is the source of Wisdom (she participates in His presence before time), yet the “wisest” creature is actually leading the people astray (not unlike Solomon’s embrace of pagan worship, in spite of his unparalleled genius). God is associated with light, and light is generally goodness; yet He is wrapped in darkness (Ps 18:11; wrapped in light Ps 104:2). God resides in darkness (Exodus 20:21, Deuteronomy 4:11; 5:22, even when His Name enters the Temple, Solomon makes reference to God swelling in darkness/thick clouds 1 Kings 8:12//2 Chronicles 6:11. Meanwhile, Satan (the prince of darkness) is also known as

Lucifer (*hilel; light bearer*) of Psalm 146:8 (The Lord opens the eyes of the blind...”).

There are places where God opens the eyes, Isaiah 35:5 (the eyes of the blind shall be open) and 42:7 (“open blind eyes” and free prisoners). Obviously, in the ministry of Jesus numerous times heals the blind.

On a symbolic understanding, knowledge and seeing are often interchangeable. Some verbs “to see” also mean “to know.” To be blind can be moral or intellectual as well as physical. When they eat the fruit there are eyes will be opened, so the serpent said something true there.

*Yada* (“to ascertain by seeing” hence to know, perceive, understand, recognize) There is also an English expression “you’ll see” to express coming to find out (Find is also a sight term) and come to know. “I don’t see what you are saying” means I do not understand. Know is also used for sexual intercourse

*Tove* and *Rah* Good and Bad (evil, malignant, disagreeable, sad, wrong, distress and calamity). This is not a moral tree (good vs evil) but rather the whole range of good things and bad things.

Genesis 3:6 the decision!

We speak often of patterns in the Bible and I have said that I think revelation includes God showing Himself to us and also showing us the patterns of our life (both good and bad). The question “what happened” (earth/literal-concrete-material/modern) is less important than “what does it mean?” (heaven/symbolic-universal-spiritual/Ancient-Biblical). Lets look at four words (ra’ah,

issaha, tov, laqah) which occur here and elsewhere connected to ‘world changing’ sins

Gen 6:2 the sons of God *ra’ah* the (bat Adam) were *tov* and *laqah* them as *issaha*

Partial 12:14 The Egyptians will see Sarah is beautiful (*yape=fair*) Pharaoh TOOK her.

1 Kings 11:2 David and Bathsheba He *ra’ah issaha tove* 11:3 he *laqah*.

The words--

*Issaha ra’ah woman saw* “Saw” occurs 1313x. It can connote to regard, look at and ponder. On the universal level of sin, one precursor to sinful choices is looking at and pondering the opportunity. The Greek word *nous* (mind) came to be understood by some Fathers as “the eye of the soul.” Obviously words like “soul” have had different meanings in different cultures (different times and places), buy the idea of the mind “perceiving and receiving impressions—physical and non-physical—can be applicable to ascertaining the mistake of Eve, or more importantly, “my” mistakes, and how to avoid them. How we “see things” affects how they “impact us.”

*Tov ma’akal good for food*

Already Eve has made an assessment on good/bad. She exists because it was not good for the man to be alone, now she “sees” (determines, perceives) that the fruit is ‘good’ for *ma’akal* 30x (*root akal is eat*) literally edible, so food, most often translated as meat. Leviticus 19:23 also has a command not to eat of the fruit of a tree, in that case during the first three years when the fruit is considered

“uncircumcised.” There is no indication that the two are to be read in tandem, but it may raise the issue of “timing”? Another reference to fruit trees and eating, Ezekiel 47:2 vision of the water flowing out of the Temple (Jesus). ‘Along the banks of the river there will be all sorts of trees which bear fruit for eating (and leaves for healing)’ (an Eden reference). Eating is turned on its head in Jeremiah 7, 16, 19, 34, the prophet warns that the flesh of (dead) humans will be the food of birds. (also Psalm 74, 79) Eschatological reversal (raise up lowly and weak, cast down high and mighty) is associated with justice/judgment and God setting things right.

*Ta’ava ayin pleasant to eyes*

*Ta’ava* 20x (root ‘ava—to desire, covet, crave, long for, lust after) negative and positive. Next appearance, Numbers 11:4 the *asafsup* (collection, rabble) lusted for meat and complained. *Lust, crave, delight*. Psalm 10 contrasts the desires of the sinner and the desires of the faithful. Psalms 6 and Proverbs 8 make up 70% of usage, mostly negative.

[excursus “Passions”

Type in the word “lusts” at the BLB and it provides 19x in NKJV (all NT), 2x RSV, 22x ASV, 1x ESV. Different words are used for the sinful desires which haunt us and drive us.

*Epithymia* 38x Mark 4:19 Jesus uses a parable of seeds and comments that “lusts and desires” choke the word which has been planted. (In Luke it expresses His desire to eat the Last Supper with His disciples) John 8:44 Jesus calls his adversaries children of the devil who will do the lusts of their father. Romans 1:24 famously says that God

has handed (idolatrous) people over to their unclean desires. Galatians 5:16 (walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh). Ephesians 4:22 (put away the old man and deceitful desires) Colossians 3:5 (dead to the flesh and its passions/*pathos* (*evil desires which bring suffering*) and *epithymia*/*desires* 1 Thessalonians 4:6 combines the words (lustful passions) in describing the pagans who do not know God. 1 Peter 2:11 the lusts of the flesh war against the soul, 4:2 seek the will of God not the lust of flesh of men, and 4:3 gives a litany of words for (passion, desire, lust) pagan practice. 1 John 2:17 the world and its desires is passing away. Revelation 18:14 A prophetic song about the fall of Babylon, tells the merchants, “The *opora*/FRUITS (1x) for which you *epithymia* and all your dainties and splendor are lost to you and never to be found again” (note Babylon is the counterfeit Garden, the land of exile, the home of the human temple tower [ziggurat])

In the Orthodox Psychotherapy (Healing of the Soul/Spirit) the Christian is counseled to guard the soul/nous. The same language as the garden in Genesis 2. To attend to what one receives through looking/pondering. The soul is beset by the passions/desires, which one is to turn from and turn to the Lord. One listens to God, and does not attend to the desires which come to mind. The modern (non-believer) person conforms his/her identity to desires. I was born wanting this, so it must be good (God would not make me ‘wrong’). The ancient faith declares we were made good but have been wounded, we are soul sick, and we must conform not to our desires but to God’s will. In this context the sin of Eve is the archetype of what ails us—we

trust in our own experience and assessment of reality.  
More to follow on that.]

### *Ayin eyes*

The first use of the word ‘eyes’ occurs in the temptation account. Not surprisingly it occurs often, almost 900x in the Bible. It is translated in different ways (for example “found favor in your sight, Lord”). Often people have their eyes opened to see (Gen 21 When Hagar sees that she is pregnant she disdains Sarai in her eyes. Sara sends her away which was displeasing in Abraham’s eyes, and as the slave girl lies dying in the desert God opens her eyes to see a fountain). Common expression, someone lifts up their eyes to see.

There is resonance between Eve and Israel’s tribes in Judges 17:6 & 21:25 “There was no king in Israel, each one did what was right in his own eyes.” In contemporary Christianity, such a thing is considered virtuous, many a conservative has told me to do what I think is best. The Bible has a flashing yellow light at those words—be cautious. We are too quick to assume the guidance of the Holy Spirit and too blind to see that we are blind!

Psalm 37:1-2 There is a voice of rebellion deep in the heart of the wicked; there is no fear of God before his eyes. He flatters himself in his own eyes that his hateful sin will not be found out.” This, of course, is a brilliant expression of the mythic/symbolic insight into Genesis 3. We trust our eyes (our senses and desires) and we act in accord with them. Fallen humanity is not simply evil, we are also foolish, ignorant, misled, confused, and an assortment of other things. Assuming “I am okay” is what takes us off the

path, this is especially true of our reading of Scripture. My greatest fear is the same deception and error which blinded Jesus' adversaries is dimming my sight—my passions/flesh, the world/social influences, and the devil—demonic spirits which are opposed to God. In the material realm there are frequencies which humans cannot see or hear, and in the spiritual realm there are the same laws at work. As our human perceptions are impacted by natural limitations, disease, environmental factors and the like, so, too, will spiritual perception be affected. For example, in dim light people all cannot see as well, and if someone blocks our view, we cannot see!

*Hamad sakal desired for wisdom*

*Hamad* occurs for the second time in the Bible, the first in Genesis 2:9 (God made every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, including the tree of life and tree of knowledge of good and bad). The word is primarily translated as desire (11/21) but also covet, lust and by extension be precious or pleasant.

*Sakal* wise, but not necessarily spiritual. Prudence, understanding connected to success and prosperity. Wisdom, like much else in the Jewish Bible, was understood in terms of the material world and the skills and understanding to get the “daily bread.” Biblical “wisdom” does not have the spiritual aspect which most of us associate with it (in contrasting it to knowledge).

*Laqah (took) (ate) and Nathan (gave) issh (man) akal-eat*

Notice the parallels to Jesus feeding the crowds and Last Supper. He took, gave and they ate. However, Jesus blesses the bread, an element missing here, and another

example of the “spirit of antichrist” expressed in a counterfeit.

Based on the reading, it appears that Adam was with Eve at the time and was a willing, if seemingly passive, participant.

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// 1 Kings 3. After the prophet Nathan and his mother Bathsheba successfully outmaneuvered Adonijah to get Solomon crowned as king (brothers in deadly conflict is another repeating pattern from Genesis!), Solomon has a dream vision. The content is echoing the Genesis 3 narrative.

There is an issue with Israel making sacrifices in the *bama* (*high places, heights*) literal mountains and hills, it also refers to the human construction of platforms. The ziggurats (Tower of Babel) had shrines on top. The contrast with the original high place of Eden is no doubt apparent to the ancient reader. God comes to Solomon in a dream. He says that his father David walked (*halak*) with God in righteousness, contrast with Adam and Eve hiding when God *halak* in the Garden after the sin. Solomon asks for a *shamal leb* (hear. Listen. Obey. So “understanding heart”) which is the opposite of Adam/Eve. He wants to judge “good and evil” which God grants him. He identified himself as a child. God is pleased with the request so He gives him a wise and discerning heart. The end of Solomon’s story,

however, is wreckage. Wisdom did not keep him faithful to YHWH the God of Israel, and the ensuing civil war during his son's reign put an end to united Israel and began a long history of decline and exile.

There is tension in the Bible concerning the limits of wisdom (for example Ecclesiastes). It provides the corrective of "mystery" to temper our "understanding"

\*Note Eve stands and speaks for herself, she is accountable. She is not simply a voiceless nonentity under the authority of her husband—especially significant in light of the culture!

